NORTHERN ART

Studies 2012-2016

Paulo Martins Oliveira

Rogier van der Weyden
Konrad Witz
Bosch
Gerard David
Grünewald
Mabuse
Bruegel
Rembrandt
Vermeer

Northern Art

Studies 2012-2016

Title: *Northern Art. Studies 2012-2016*
Author: Paulo Martins Oliveira
Collection and edition: October, 2025
Front and back cover: Jheronimus Bosch, *Temptation of St. Anthony*, MNAA (photos PMO)
Page format: mainly A4, also 6x9

Until 2016 this research was published mostly at https://independent.academia.edu/PauloOliveira51
also being partially collected in *Separata 1* and *The Akenpapers 1*
Furthermore, some of the studies collected here have been continued in *Octógono – cadernos de polissemia artística*, available at:
https://independent.academia.edu/PauloMartinsOliveira_octogono
https://archive.org/search?query=creator%3A%22Paulo+Martins+Oliveira%22&sort=-publicdate

Table of contents – general and thematic

general

The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch [12 pages] | : 11

O ovo de Bosch / The egg of Bosch [10 pages] | : 23

Porquê “Jheronimus” Bosch? [3 pages] | : 33

As faces de Engelbert [2 pages] | : 37

The (diabolic) oak of the Rovere Popes [9 pages] | : 39

Rembrandt and the art of compromise [7 pages] | : 49

O engenho de Matthias Grünewald [6 pages] | : 57

Bosch, the surdo canis [17 pages] | : 63

The dating and signature of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* [3 pages] | : 81

Reviewing Konrad Witz [5 pages] | : 85

Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden [8 pages] | : 91

The Delights of Coudenberg [5 pages] | : 99

The Dutch Company [11 pages] | : 105

The political conscioussness of Pieter Bruegel [4 pages] | : 117

Rembrandt and the commissioners [3 pages] | : 121

The distracted working Dutch [3 pages] | : 125

O pecado de Mabuse [8 pages] | : 129

O cripto-Bosch de Guimarães – I [3 pages] | : 137

The forgotten disciple of Rogier van der Weyden [3 pages] | : 141

As moedas fúnebres de Carlos o Temerário [1 page] | : 145

The Netherlandish Birds [8 pages] | : 147

The deaf Bosch and the blind Bruegel [4 pages] | : 155

Bosch e a barca dos Lusitanos [5 pages] | : 159

The choices of Jheronimus Bosch [5 pages] | : 165

O cripto-Bosch de Guimarães – II [11 pages] | : 171

On the origin and meanig of Bosch's Garden [12 pages] | : 183

O cântico neerlandês de Jheronimus Bosch [7 pages] | : 195

The liberation of Brussels by Gerard David and Pieter Bruegel [7 pages] | : 203

The damned shield of 's-Hertogenbosch [13 pages] | : 211

Mabuse's surdo canis – preliminary note [3 pages] | : 225

Leonardo and the Boschian tribute – I [3 pages] | : 229

Bruegel's Tower of penitence [3 pages] | : 233

Bosch and the Eyckian influence [3 pages] | : 237

Thematic

Rogier van der Weyden

The forgotten disciple of Rogier van der Weyden [3 pages] | : 141

Konrad Witz

Reviewing Konrad Witz [5 pages] | : 85

Bosch

The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch [12 pages] | : 11

O ovo de Bosch / The egg of Bosch [10 pages] | : 23

Porquê “Jheronimus” Bosch? [3 pages] | : 33

As faces de Engelbert [2 pages] | : 37

The (diabolic) oak of the Rovere Popes [9 pages] | : 39

Bosch, the surdo canis [17 pages] | : 63

The dating and signature of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* [3 pages] | : 81

Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden [8 pages] | : 91

The Delights of Coudenberg [5 pages] | : 99

O cripto-Bosch de Guimarães – I [3 pages] | : 137

The Netherlandish Birds [8 pages] | : 147

The deaf Bosch and the blind Bruegel [4 pages] | : 155

Bosch e a barca dos Lusitanos [5 pages] | : 159

The choices of Jheronimus Bosch [5 pages] | : 165

O cripto-Bosch de Guimarães – II [11 pages] | : 171

On the origin and meanig of Bosch's Garden [12 pages] | : 183

O cântico neerlandês de Jheronimus Bosch [7 pages] | : 195

The damned shield of 's-Hertogenbosch [13 pages] | : 211

Leonardo and the Boschian tribute – I [3 pages] | : 229

Bosch and the Eyckian influence [3 pages] | : 237

Gerard David

The liberation of Brussels by Gerard David and Pieter Bruegel [7 pages] | : 203

Grünewald

O engenho de Matthias Grünewald [6 pages] | : 57

Mabuse

O pecado de Mabuse [8 pages] | : 129

Mabuse's surdo canis – preliminary note [3 pages] | : 225

Bruegel

The political conscioussness of Pieter Bruegel [4 pages] | : 117

The Netherlandish Birds [8 pages] | : 147

The deaf Bosch and the blind Bruegel [4 pages] | : 155

The liberation of Brussels by Gerard David and Pieter Bruegel [7 pages] | : 203

Bruegel's Tower of penitence [3 pages] | : 233

Rembrandt

Rembrandt and the art of compromise [7 pages] | : 49

The Dutch Company [11 pages] | : 105

Rembrandt and the commissioners [3 pages] | : 121

Vermeer

The distracted working Dutch [3 pages] | : 125

Studies

2012-2016

© - Available for consultation

The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch

Paulo Martins Oliveira

Jheronimus Bosch (ca.1450-1516) was indeed one of the most creative minds of all time.

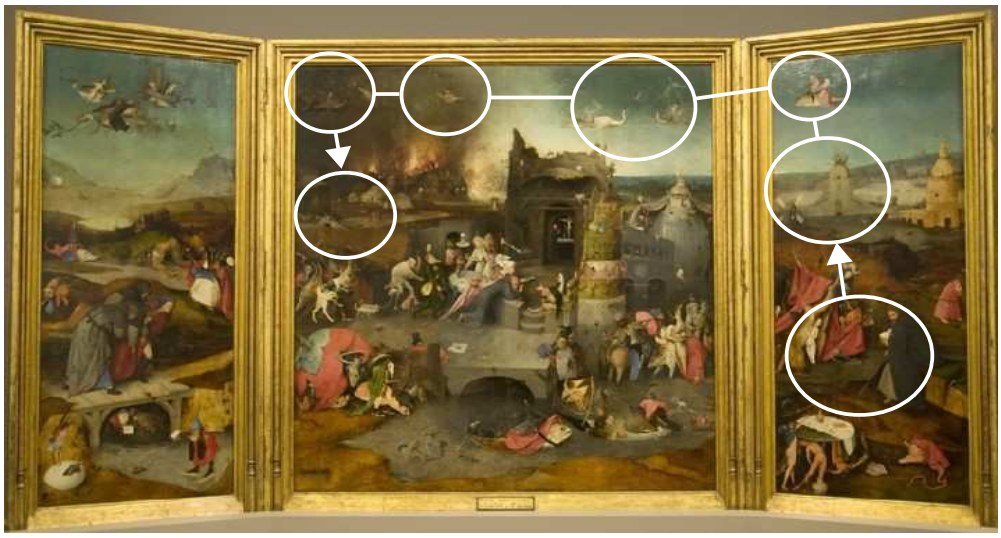
Taking to the limit a dynamic concept explored in the 15th century by Flemish and Italian masters (seizing the potential of oil painting), Bosch created and continually reinvented ambiguous images that combine several issues, highlighting the Dutch national consciousness as a matter of utmost importance.

The artist witnessed the political developments in the independent Duchy of Burgundy, of which his native Burgundian Netherlands had become the true head of the state, constituting the prototype of the modern Netherlands (and even of the Benelux).

Then, after a controversial marriage (1477), the prosperous Dutch and Flemish territories entered the orbit of the great Holy Empire, ruled by the Habsburgs, which led to uprisings, severely repressed by the imperial armies.

However, at the same time, Bosch received well-paid commissions from the new rulers, for which he constantly punished himself in his own paintings, while enciphering severe criticisms about this new political and social context (involving also the Holy See and France, in connivance with the Empire).

The triptych titled *The Temptation of St. Anthony* is a good example of Bosch's messages and artistic method. That work combines a large number of accurate sequences, and this paper addresses one of them, which begins on the right wing, evolving to the left (the "sinister" side).



Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony

The loss of a nation

1) The sequence starts by presenting St. Anthony being seduced by a demon queen, who will lead him to Alexandria.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)

2) The city of Alexandria is recognizable by its famous lighthouse. However, it presents soldiers guarding its walls, as if the city was being besieged.

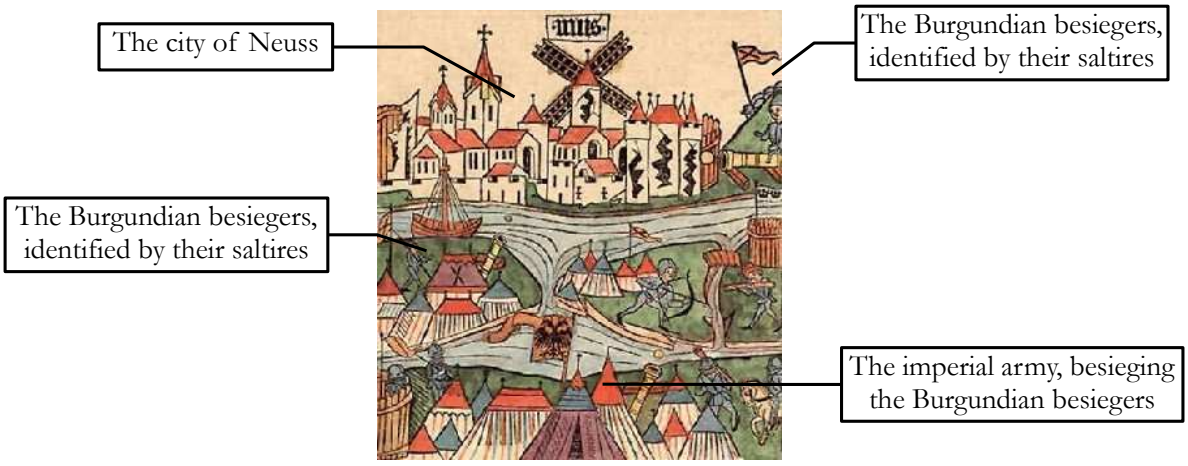
Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)

3) Indeed, in its second layer of meaning, the same image represents the European city of Neuss, besieged in 1475 by the Burgundian-Dutch army, led by Charles the Bold.

This action constituted a decisive episode, which will lead to the loss of independence of the Duchy of Burgundy.

4) The "lighthouse" represents a call for help from Neuss, and the imperial army commanded by Frederick III Habsburg would come to help the resistant city.

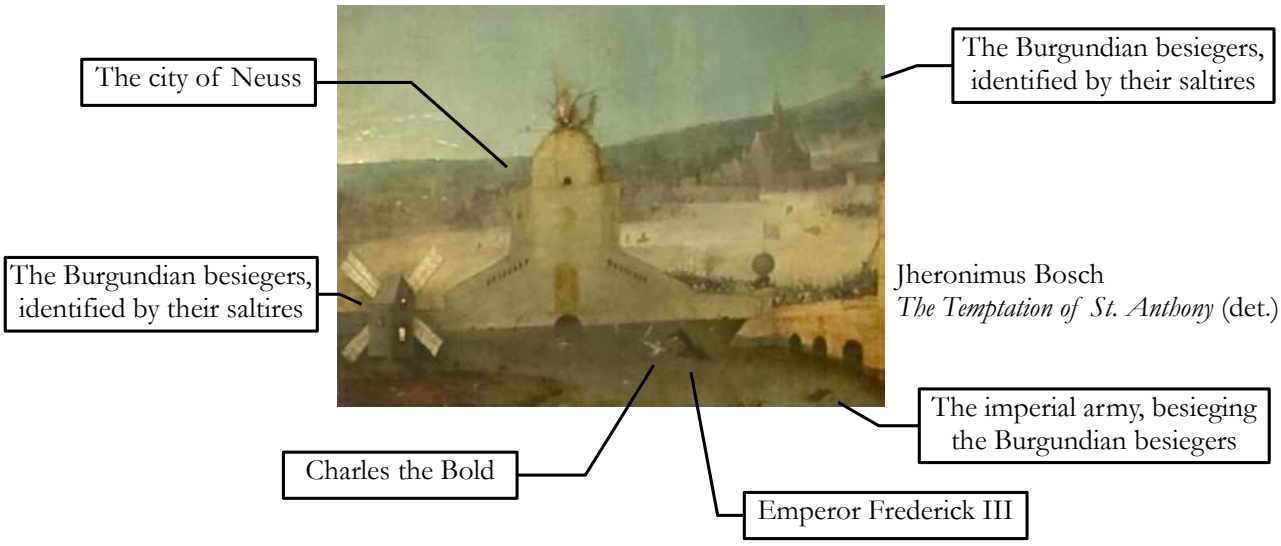
Thereby, the Burgundian besiegers became besieged by the troops of the Holy Emperor. This is represented by an illustration published by Conrad Pfettisheim.


The city of Neuss
The Burgundian besiegers, identified by their saltires
The Burgundian besiegers, identified by their saltires
The imperial army, besieging the Burgundian besiegers

Conrad Pfettisheim
The siege of Neuss

5) In the triptych of *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, Bosch allegorically concealed the same episode.

Charles the Bold is represented by a white soldier, surprised by a black dragon (Emperor Frederick III Habsburg).


The city of Neuss
The Burgundian besiegers, identified by their saltires
The Burgundian besiegers, identified by their saltires
The imperial army, besieging the Burgundian besiegers
Charles the Bold
Emperor Frederick III

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)

6) Seeing himself trapped and with no alternative, Charles the Bold was compelled to agree on a future marriage between his only daughter (Mary of Burgundy) and the imperial heir (Maximilian Habsburg).

7) This marriage could end the independence of the Duchy of Burgundy, and in fact Charles the Bold would die soon, falling in another battle without having a male son. Thereby, that marriage (1477) sealed the destiny of the State, which was ruled from the Burgundian Netherlands.

8) This is encoded by a couple on a fish of sin, flying to the left.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)

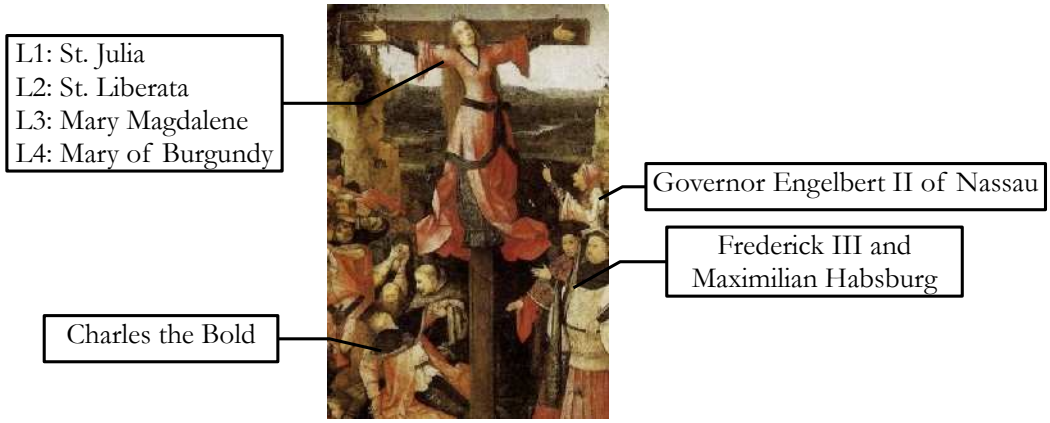
9) That marriage between Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian Habsburg was often considered as a kidnap and a plunder.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Last Judgment (det.) [frag. of Munich]

Albrecht Dürer
Portrait of Maximilian Habsburg

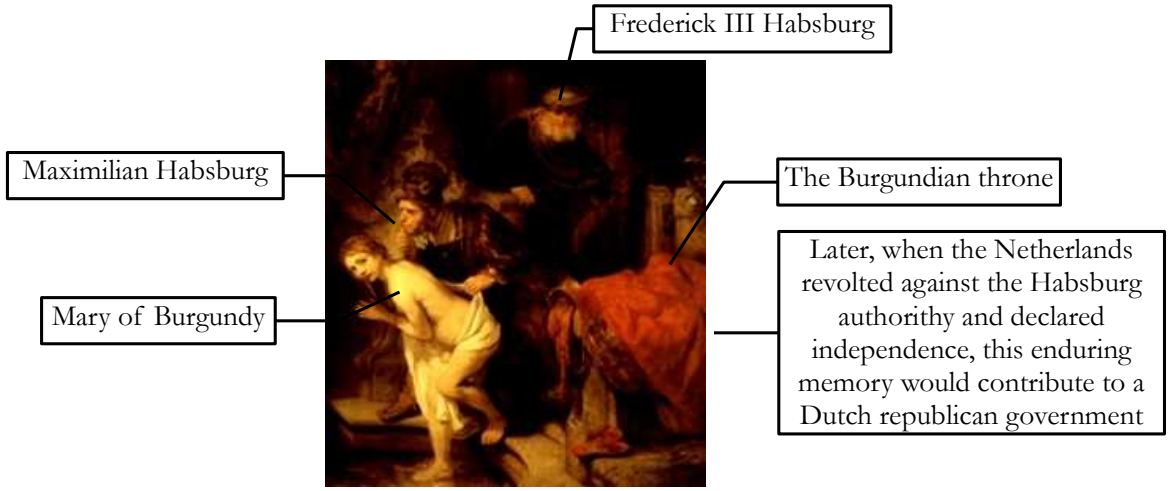
10) Examples of other variants by Jheronimus Bosch.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Adoration of the Magi (det.)



Jheronimus Bosch
Triptych of St. Julia/St. Liberata

11) The tragic figure of Mary of Burgundy was also compared to the biblical Susanna, surprised in her bath by two malicious "elders", now symbolizing Frederick III and his son Maximilian Habsburg.


Frederick III Habsburg
Maximilian Habsburg
The Burgundian throne
Mary of Burgundy
Later, when the Netherlands revolted against the Habsburg authorithy and declared independence, this enduring memory would contribute to a Dutch republican government

Rembrandt (17th century)
Susanna and the Elders

12) After the marriage, Maximilian began to impose his power over the new territories, especially the prosperous Burgundian Netherlands, which led to uprisings. This is represented by a courageous spoonbill (the national bird of the Netherlands) facing an armoured battleship.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)

13) The armoured vessel symbolizes Maximilian, because he was a famous enthusiast of jousts and armours. Actually, the aforementioned encounter between the spoonbill and the battleship expresses an unbalanced "joust".

Die Deutschen Kaiser
The eccentric Emperor Maximilian Habsburg between his predecessor Frederick III, and his successor Charles V

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)
Sarcastic depiction of Maximilian as an allie of the Holy See

Pieter Bruegel
The fall of the rebel angels (det.)
The striking memory of Maximilian

14) Maximilian will retain his power, especially after the premature death of Mary of Burgundy (1482), leaving two children of the controversial marriage (Philip the Handsome and Margaret of Austria). This is symbolized by a creature (Maximilian), riding on a egg (his offspring), essential to the Habsburg authority.

Typically and intentionally ambiguous, the "egg" is also a coin, by which Bosch denounces the growing corruption promoted by the imperials with political goals.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)

15) At that time it was common the circulation of ancient symbols and images from Egypt and the Middle East, generally associated with paganism and anti-Christianity. That particular image seems to be an adaptation of a well known Persian symbol.

Ahura Mazda
Persian symbol

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)
Another example: the Egyptian solar disk (Isis) criticized in the *Bible* (representing also the forked oak of Pope Julius II)

16) Maximilian and his demons join those who previously tortured St. Anthony in the skies (first panel of the triptych). Together they burn a resistant city, sparing a contiguous submissive village.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)

17) After the "pacification" of the rich Dutch and Flemish territories, the Habsburg army returns to the Holy Empire, which is sarcastically represented by a holy cross on an empty land, on the other side of the river.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)

18) The same idea is expressed for instance in the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, where the Habsburg army returns home after having punished the rebellious Burgundian-Dutch, who are represented by a tragic burning saltire on a patriotic windmill.

The imperials are in turn symbolized by an infernal watermill, because they lived upstream of the rivers, especially the large Rhine.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)

19) Jheronimus Bosch reinvented this narrative throughout his works, denouncing the corruption promoted by the Habsburgs and their deputies, even in the works commissioned by them.

20) This is the case of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* (commissioned by the governor appointed by the imperials), which presents three layers of meaning, the third dedicated to the mentioned political context.

21) For instance, in the first panel of that triptych, the imperial demons enter the heavenly Burgundian Netherlands, being welcomed by a giant head of Maximilian, crowned with the three of sin.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)

22) In the central panel, the Habsburg army reaches the heart of the Burgundian Netherlands by force and corruption. The armoured Maximilian is already there, taking Mary of Burgundy by marriage.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)

23) Following very precise symbolic codes, the rest of the central panel (in its third layer) is a satire of the defiled and decadent Burgundian-Dutch elites, increasingly corrupted by the imperials.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)

24) The last panel presents the destruction of the nation and the infernal punishment of both the corrupt imperials and the degenerate Burgundian-Dutch, including personal references, concerning the painter himself.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)

The crossed influences

In a painting by Bosch, all details have exact and identifiable meanings. Indeed, even the smallest devil isn't random, since its features and props have specific objectives, carefully combined accordingly to the different layers.

Moreover, if it was relatively common for certain painters to superimpose two, three, or even four identities on a single figure, in a particular case Bosch will achieve the merging of ten different characters, each one recognizable and serving various intersecting narratives with "mechanical" precision.

Therefore, the works designed by Jheronimus Bosch, and painted by him always with the assistance of his youngest nephew Anthonis, are complex pieces of symbolic engineering, which resembles clock-work.

When structuring his original narratives, Bosch was inspired by numerous sources, including works of other artists, as was common at the time.

For instance, because the Habsburgs could not subdue the Venetians, Bosch satirized the imperials by placing them in a negative and diabolic version of Venice, with water up to their ankles.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)
This image synthetizes the St. Mark's basilica, the palace of the doges, and even the Zodiac Clock installed by the Rainieri family in the late 15th century.

Bosh had indeed travelled to Italy, where he was inspired by Gentile Bellini, who a few years before had created a positive and a negative version of Venice.

Procession in St. Mark's Square Gentile Bellini *St. Mark preaching in Alexandria*

The association between an anti-Venice and Alexandria is also visible in Bosch's *Temptation of St. Anthony*, since it was to that Egyptian city that the saint went, led by the demon queen (first layer).

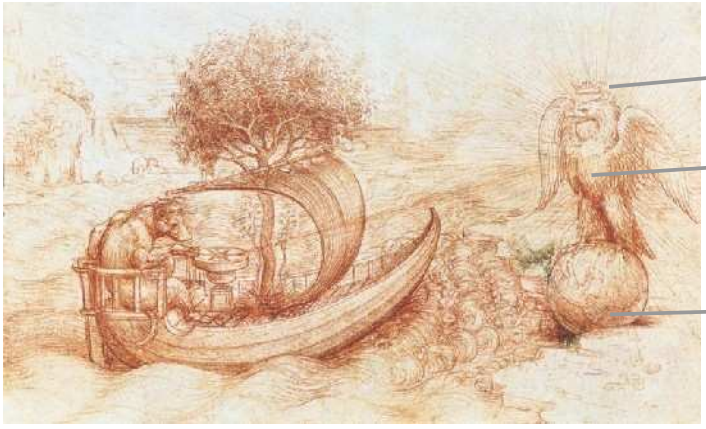
Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)
The exterior of the city in the 2nd wing of the triptych (Alexandria, in its 1st layer) corresponds symbolically to the interior seen in the central panel (also an Anti-Venice, in another layer of meaning, as said above).

However, on the other hand, Bosch also left a deep influence on the Italian artists of the Renaissance, and even the almost chauvinist Michelangelo Buonarroti honoured him in the Sistine Chapel.

For instance, there are also several links between the works of Bosch and Leonardo. Among other cases, Leonardo's *Allegory with wolf and eagle* was inspired by paintings of the northern artist, and probably was made in his memory, since the drawing is dated to ca.1516.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Ship of Fouls

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)
The "eagle" represents the Habsburgs, but the "crown" with three legs also symbolizes the French three fleurs-de-lis



Leonardo da Vinci
Allegory with wolf and eagle
The meaning of Leonardo's drawing matches exactly the specific concerns expressed by Bosch

The "egg" by Bosch is also an imperial globe, adapting a regional proverb

Other variants of the "imperial globe" by Bosch, and later by Bruegel, always with precise meanings:

Conclusion

Throughout the centuries, the works of Jheronimus Bosch became symbols of mystery and madness.

Actually, they are precise and logical constructions that superimpose different issues, of which the national and political consciousness is undoubtedly a matter of major relevance.

So, these pieces of extreme ingenuity constitute a paradigm of rationality, pushing it almost to the limit of its potential.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)
One of many symbolic self-portraits of Bosch,
in the second row behind the false three magi
(led by Emperor Maximilian Habsburg)

[2012]

Extracted from
Separata 1
Ed. Português + English
ISBN: 978-1479248100
2.ª edição / 2nd edition
Setembro / September, 2012

O OVO DE BOSCH

—

THE EGG OF BOSCH

Durante os séculos XV e XVI, vários artistas ilustraram os princípios do crescente Humanismo através de imagens que celebravam o próprio intelecto.

Este modelo dinâmico requeria o uso de soluções de compromisso, e um dos principais especialistas neste tipo de procedimento foi Jheronimus Bosch (f.1516), que criou diversas obras de excepcional complexidade, ainda assim perfeitamente lógicas e mesmo quase "mecânicas".

Um exemplo ilustrativo do conceito de Bosch pode ser encontrado no símbolo do ovo, o qual na maioria dos casos representa o túmulo onde Jesus foi sepultado, e de onde Ele emergiu ressuscitado durante a Páscoa.

—

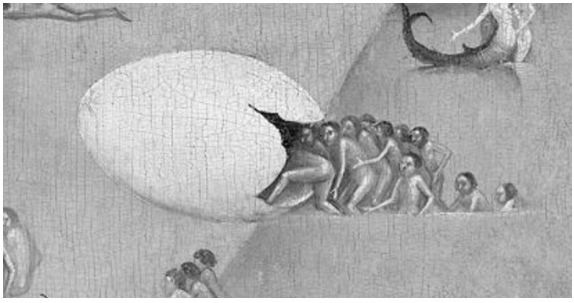
During the 15th and the 16th centuries, several artists illustrated the principles of the growing Humanism through images that celebrate the intellect itself.

In this context, they planned sophisticated works with different layers of meaning, which allowed the combination of multiple narratives, accurately superimposed on the same deliberate ambiguous figures.

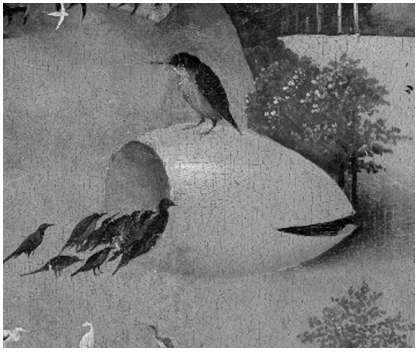
This dynamic model required the use of compromise solutions, and one of the main experts in this kind of procedure was Jheronimus Bosch (d.1516), who created several works of exceptional complexity, yet perfectly logical and even almost "mechanical".

An illustrative example of Bosch's concept can be found in the symbol of the egg, which in most cases represents the tomb where Jesus was buried, and from which He emerged resurrected during the Easter.

Albrecht Dürer
Cristo como Homem de Lamentos
Christ as the Man of Sorrows



Jheronimus Bosch
Jardim das Delícias
Garden of Earhly Delights
(dets.)



Por exemplo, isto explica a forma circundante na obra de Dürer *Cristo como o homem de lamentos* (Karlsruhe), onde o ressuscitado Messias retorna temporariamente à vida e dores humanas, antes da transfiguração e ascensão para o Pai.

De qualquer modo, foi de facto Bosch quem desenvolvera as mais complexas imagens usando esse símbolo, como pode ser visto no *Jardim das Delícias* (Madrid), onde os conformistas, os corruptos e os condenados entram nos ovos, em vez de deles saírem.

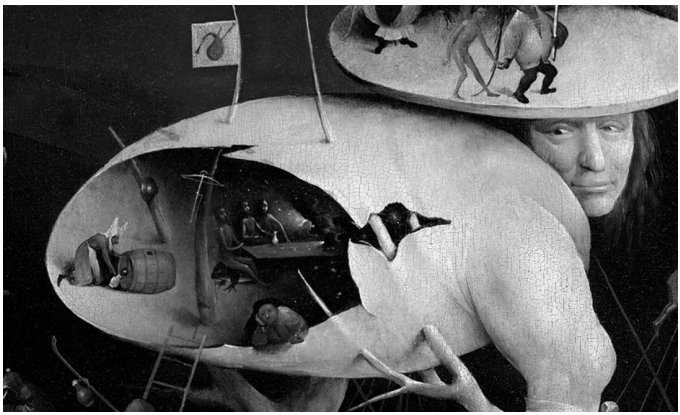
Assim, no painel central, o grande ovo é representado "realisticamente", enquanto no volante esquerdo ele tem também a forma de uma rocha oca e mesmo de uma mitra dourada. De facto, está aqui codificada uma crítica ao alto clero, representado pela grande ave negra no topo desta corrompida "igreja". Sendo uma rocha (petrus), este ovo também alude a Pedro, ou seja, ao Vaticano.

—

For instance, this explains the surrounding shape in Dürer's *Christ as the man of sorrows* (Karlsruhe), in which the resurrected Messiah returns temporarily to the human life and pains, before the transfiguration and the ascension to the Father.

Anyway, it was indeed Jheronimus Bosch who had developed the most complex images using that symbol, as it can be seen in the *Garden of Earthly Delights* (Madrid), where the conformists, the corrupt and the condemned enter eggs, instead of exit them.

Thus, in the central panel, the large egg is "realistically" depicted, while on the left wing it has also a form of a hollow rock, and even of a golden mitre. Indeed, it is here encrypted a criticism of the high clergy, represented by the large black bird on the top of this corrupted "church". Being a rock (petrus), this egg alludes to Peter, that is, to the Vatican.



Jheronimus Bosch
Jardim das Delícias
Garden of Earhly Delights
(det.)

Jheronimus Bosch
Tentações de Santo Antão
Tempation of St. Anthony
(det.)

Por seu turno, no painel lateral oposto, o ovo está inscrito num grande torso humano, como é claramente demonstrado pelo seu "pescoço" e "ombros". Esta imagem é também um tronco oco e uma taberna, reflectindo punições específicas profetizadas na *Bíblia*.

Todas estas metamorfoses expressam as diferentes camadas sobrepostas de significado, cada uma com um objectivo preciso, compondo obras de arte dinâmicas.

Variando constantemente as soluções e encontrando novos sinónimos visuais, Bosch continuou a adaptar o ovo ao longo das suas obras.

Por exemplo, no volante esquerdo das *Tentações de Santo Antão* (Lisboa), a recém-nascida descendência de uma íbis é imediatamente devorada pela progenitora, a qual representa a antítese quer de um pelicano (um símbolo de Cristo), quer de um colhereiro (um símbolo nacionalista neerlandês).

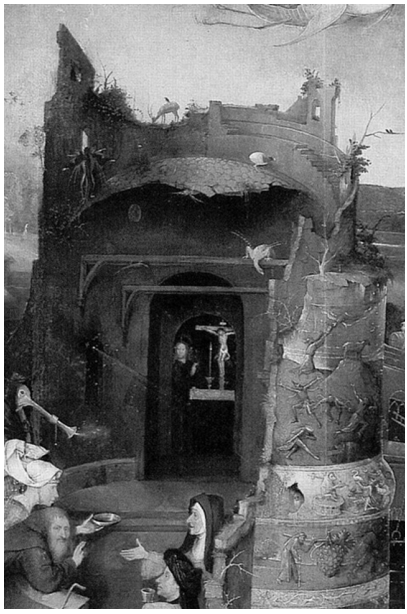
—

By its turn, in the opposite side panel, the egg is merged with the large human torso, as clearly demonstrated by its "neck" and "shoulders". This image also represents a hollow trunk and a tavern, following specific punishments prophesied in the *Bible*.

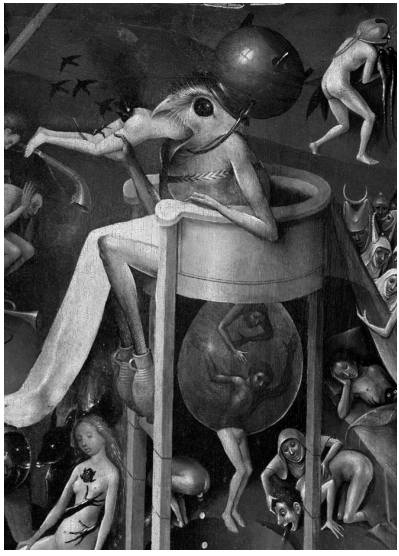
All the metamorphoses express the different superimposed layers of meaning, each one with a precise objective, composing dynamic artworks.

Constantly varying his solutions and finding new visual synonyms, Bosch continued to adapt the egg throughout his paintings.

For instance, on the left wing of the *Temptation of St. Anthony* (Lisbon), the newborn offspring of an ibis is immediately devoured by a genitor, which in turn represents the antithesis of both a pelican (a symbol of Christ), and of a spoonbill (a Dutch nationalist symbol).



Jheronimus Bosch
Tentações de Santo Antão
Tempation of St. Anthony
(det.)



Jheronimus Bosch
Jardim das Delícias
Garden of Earhly Delights
(det.)

No painel central do mesmo tríptico está representada uma alta estrutura arruinada, que entre outros aspectos representa o túmulo de Cristo, razão pela qual o tecto tem a configuração de um ovo quebrado.

Não obstante, é necessário regressar ao *Jardim das Delícias* para encontrar o mais elaborado exercício usando o mesmo elemento, nomeadamente na grande ave entronizada.

Considerando as respectivas camadas, e através de soluções de compromisso, este animal representa o Anti-Cristo, mas também uma águia insaciável (Maximiliano Habsburgo), um falcão (Engelbert II de Nassau) e uma galinha, neste último caso aludindo à infeliz Joana a Louca, dando a descendência dos Habsburgos directamente à condenação.

—

In the central panel of the same triptych it is depicted a ruined tall structure, which among other issues represents the tomb of Christ, reason why the ceiling has the configuration of a cracked egg.

However, it is necessary to return to the *Garden of Earthly Delights* to find the most elaborate exercise using the same element, namely in the great enthroned bird.

Considering the respective layers of meaning, and through compromise solutions, this animal represents the Anti-Christ, but also a voracious eagle (Maximilian Habsburg), a hawk (Engelbert II of Nassau) and a chicken, in this case alluding to the unfortunate Joanna the Mad delivering the Habsburg offspring directly into condemnation.

De facto, Jheronimus Bosch encriptou as suas fortes convicções nacionalistas nas obras vendidas aos Habsburgos imperiais (os novos governantes) e aos Nassau (nesse tempo seus delegados na Borgonha Neerlandesa).

Sumarizando, Bosch desenvolveu ainda mais um conceito artístico já caracterizado pela sua grande flexibilidade, permitindo aos artistas diversificarem e dissimularem mensagens complexas.

—

In fact, Jheronimus Bosh enciphered his strong nationalist beliefs in the works sold to the imperial Habsburgs (the new rulers), as to the Nassau (at that time their deputies in the Burgundian Netherlands).

Summarizing, Bosh developed even more an artistic concept already characterized by its great flexibility, allowing artists do diversify and veil complex messages.

© - Disponibilizado para consulta

Porquê "Jheronimus" Bosch?

Paulo Martins Oliveira

Apesar da comum latinização dos nomes próprios dos artistas, no caso de Bosch deverá ser preferida a versão local "Jheronimus" para o designar.

De facto, o próprio pintor assim o demonstra em todos os seus trípticos, nos quais o respectivo nome surge por extenso ou, em alternativa, através de um monograma que combina um "J" e um "B" (Jheronimus Bosch), formando ainda um "M", sinalizando-o como membro da Confraria de Nossa Senhora.

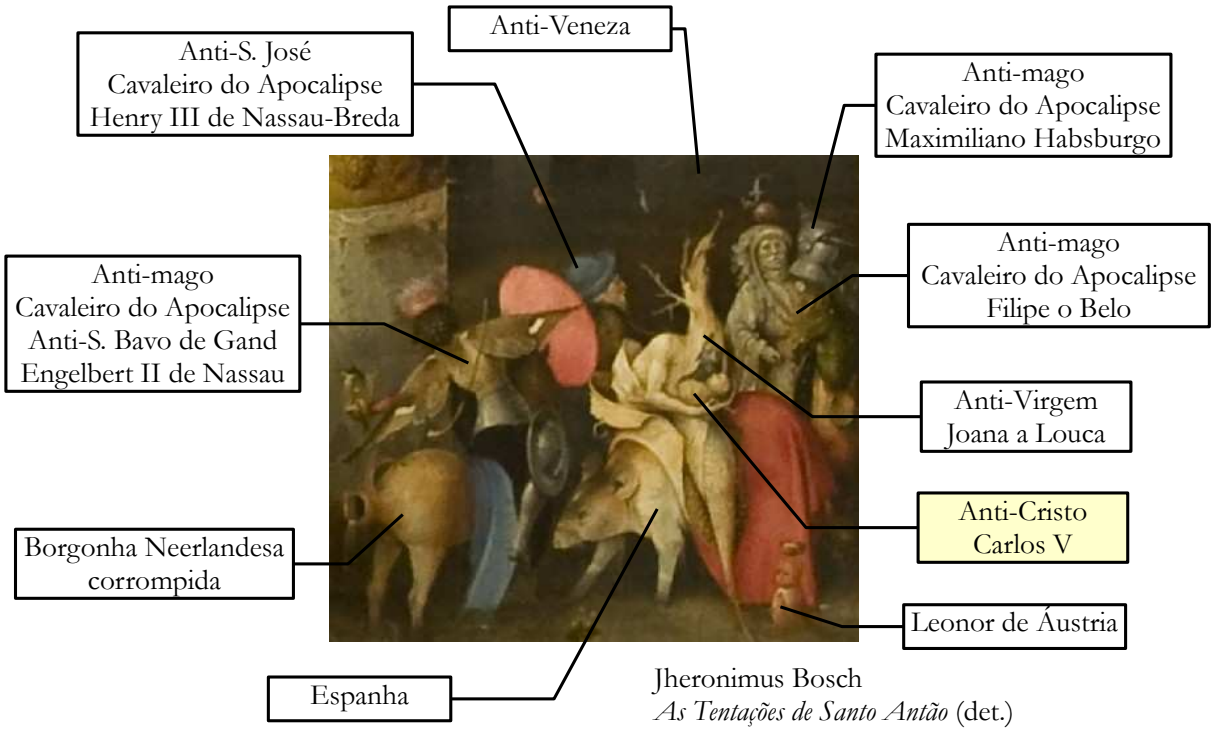
J/B, M

Jheronimus Bosch
O Jardim das Delícias (det.)

Este tipo de exercícios com letras era relativamente comum à época, e é possível encontrar vários outros exemplos nas obras do mesmo pintor neerlandês, como por exemplo na sarcástica representação de Filipe o Belo, integrado numa falsa e demoníaca Sagrada Família que governa a "Veneza" que os Habsburgos na verdade não conseguiam subjugar.

F/S (Filips de Schone)
Filipe como o fruto do pecado (o casamento entre Maria de Borgonha e Maximiliano Habsburgo)
Filipe o Belo (Filips de Schone, em neerlandês)

Jheronimus Bosch
As Tentações de Santo Antão (det.)



Jheronimus Bosch
As Tentações de Santo Antão (det.)

Construída em várias camadas de significado, esta imagem irá destacar simbolicamente o jovem Carlos V como um Anti-Cristo, pois esperava-se que viesse a ser um super-imperador na Europa. É aqui apresentado como um recém-nascido, de modo a integrá-lo no contexto de uma falsa Sagrada Família (do Sacro Império), e onde igualmente surge a sua irmã mais velha (Leonor), que por sua vez indicia a mãe Joana como uma ilusória Virgem. Noutras camadas, o pai Filipe assume outros papéis, contribuindo para codificar o significado da imagem.

Como acima se exemplificou, a fusão de letras faz parte dos complexos sistemas narrativos de Bosch, nos quais o próprio artista se faria igualmente integrar, como forma de expiar os respectivos pecados, em especial as lucrativas encomendas recebidas dos imperiais.

É aliás por este motivo que o monograma J/B surge em lâminas de facas, em cujas duas faces Bosch reconhecia uma analogia consigo próprio.

Neste contexto, nos casos em que o artista optou pelo referido monograma, o nome por extenso foi dispensado, por redundância.

Assim, constituindo as suas obras de referência, os trípticos que Jheronimus Bosch pintou ou cuja concepção dirigiu podem ser elencados em duas categorias, no que diz especificamente respeito à identificação da autoria.

Trípticos assinalados com o nome por extenso

*

A Adoração dos Magos, Madrid

O Carro do Feno, Madrid

As Tentações de Santo Antão, Lisboa

O Eremita, Veneza

Santa Júlia/Liberata (sobr.), Veneza

Trípticos assinalados com o monograma J/B

O Jardim das Delícias, Madrid

O Julgamento Final, Viena

O Julgamento Final (dir.), Bruges

* Na grafia antiga, a letra ſ equivale a um longo "s", como se observa no nome "Boſch" (=Bosch).
Por curiosidade, uma variante subsiste na língua alemã com a letra ß, correspendente a um duplo "s".

Note-se que na versão por extenso, o apelido inícia com minúscula, o que reflecte uma auto-diminuição que, sistematicamente e sob várias formas, o penitente artista introduziu nas suas obras.

Na versão por natureza já sintetizada do monograma, o "B" surge maiúsculo, aqui também como um "M". Este é o caso do *Jardim das Delícias*, mas mesmo neste tríptico, noutros pontos, Bosch fez-se ainda associar a um "b" minúsculo, em vários dos auto-retratos simbólicos aí existentes.

Deverá ainda ser acrescentado que, tratando-se de uma versão local, o nome "Jheronimus" assume uma significância nacionalista, que aliás é transversal às suas pinturas.

Do mesmo modo, e como era então habitual, o nome revela a inclusão de uma referência cristológica (Jhesus), que deveria servir de permanente guia moral aquando das decisões de todos os dias.

Em suma, a versão "Jheronimus" deverá ser preferida a "Hieronymus", uma vez que foi a eleita pelo artista para identificar as suas pinturas, e também porque se integra com naturalidade num contexto histórico onde o simbolismo assumia particular importância, mesmo na vida quotidiana.

[2012]

© - Disponibilizado para consulta

As Faces de Engelbert

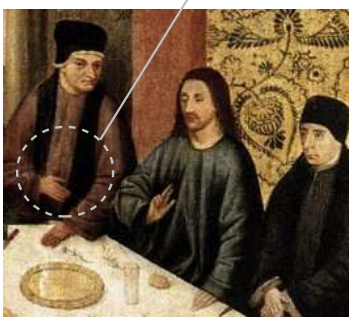
Paulo Martins Oliveira

Nas respectivas obras, Jheronimus Bosch codificou a sua opinião sobre os novos governantes Habsburgos, bem como relativamente ao compatriota e cliente Engelbert II de Nassau (ou Engelbrecht), outrora próximo de Carlos o Temerário (†1477), mas que agora, em inícios do século XVI, administrava a Borgonha Neerlandesa em nome dos imperiais. Por essa razão, Bosch considerou Engelbert como uma versão negativa do patriótico S. Bavo de Gand, incluindo-o em vários trabalhos, mesmo naqueles vendidos ao próprio governador.

Retrato oficial de Engelbert (c.1490), e figurações simbólicas por Bosch
(em pinturas e desenhos originais, bem como em cópias e adaptações em gravura)

Borgonha Neerlandesa corrompida

(sobrep.)

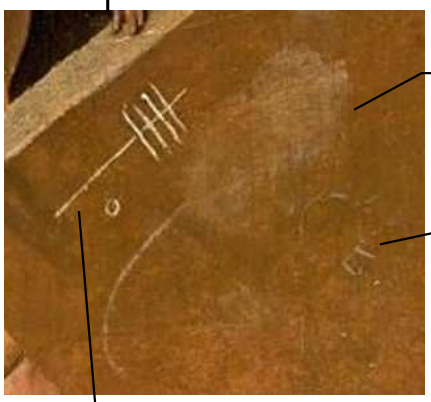


Como "mau ladrão e Judas"

Com os Habsburgos

S. Bavo de Gand,
a antítese de Engelbert

O *Jardim das Delícias* foi encomendado por Engelbert, que faleceu em 1504, pouco antes da conclusão. Por isso, Jheronimus Bosch ainda o incluiu entrando no Inferno directamente pela direita (em sentido contrário à evolução do tríptico), ingenuamente protegido pela sua indulgência. Todavia, a outra carta confirmará as culpas e a condenação do cliente, de acordo com a gramática simbólica de Bosch.



A fusão de um cão com um rato simboliza o mercenário Bosch e o assistente Anthonis van Aken, auto-conotados com o próprio cliente e com o poder Habsburgo.

A "mesa" é tambémo painel de um tríptico, assinalando os pecados da oficina dos Van Aken, que lucrava com os Habsburgos e com os delegados Nassau.

Data: 1504

O "N" invertido, representando a corrupção dos Nassau.

A obra seria finalizada ainda em 1504, e entregue ao sobrinho e sucessor Henry III de Nassau-Breda.

Retrato de Henry III, e figuração simbólica junto do falecido tio Engelbert.

Mais tarde, os Nassau tornaram-se líderes independentistas neerlandeses, e o enigmático tríptico foi-lhes confiscado e remetido para Espanha, onde o Habsburgo Filipe II era um incauto apreciador e coleccionador de Bosch.

[2012]

© - Available for consultation

The (diabolic) oak of the Rovere Popes

Paulo Martins Oliveira

Despite belonging to the same family of the spoonbill, the ibis has a negative connotation in the symbolic grammar of Jheronimus Bosch, representing the corrupt.

In the triptych titled *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, the artist depicted a skater ibis, made of compromise solutions, since it combines three layers of meaning.

This paper starts by addressing one of that layers, which expresses the criticism aimed at the papacy of Julius II, who was from the Italian family of the Rovere (oak, in English).

Thus, representing this controversial and ambitious Pope, the ibis has a funnel on its head, which in this layer symbolizes a papal crown (tiara), having inserted in it a twig that alludes to the forked oak in the coat of arms of the "Warrior Pope", also known as "il Terrible".

The coat of arms of the Rovere Popes
Sixtus IV: 1471-1483
Julius II: 1503-1513

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)

The document in the beak is related to this issue, because it contains a written riddle, as was common at that time. In this case, the word should be read from right to left:

g / i / u / l / i / o (Italian for Julius).

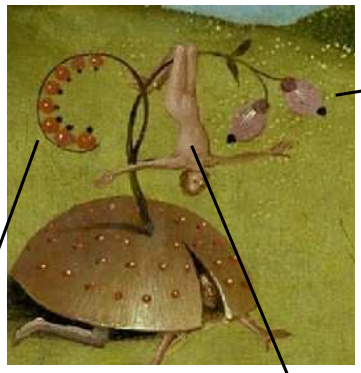
The " l " is forked, which helps to disguise the solution, but also symbolizes the papal oak, points this Julius as the II, and demonizes him. Moreover, that forked " l " represents the Greek letter Tau, in an autonomous layer.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony (det.)

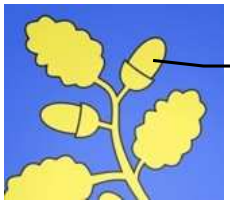
During the governments of the Rovere Popes (Sixtus IV and Julius II), several artists encoded denunciations using specific, related symbols such as forked elements and acorns, for instance.

Examples from the *Garden of Earthly Delights* (Jheronimus Bosch)

The Egyptian solar disk (Isis) also symbolizes the papal forked tree.



Symbolic acorns



Acorns in the papal coat of arms

Oranges, in an autonomous criticism concerning the Medici

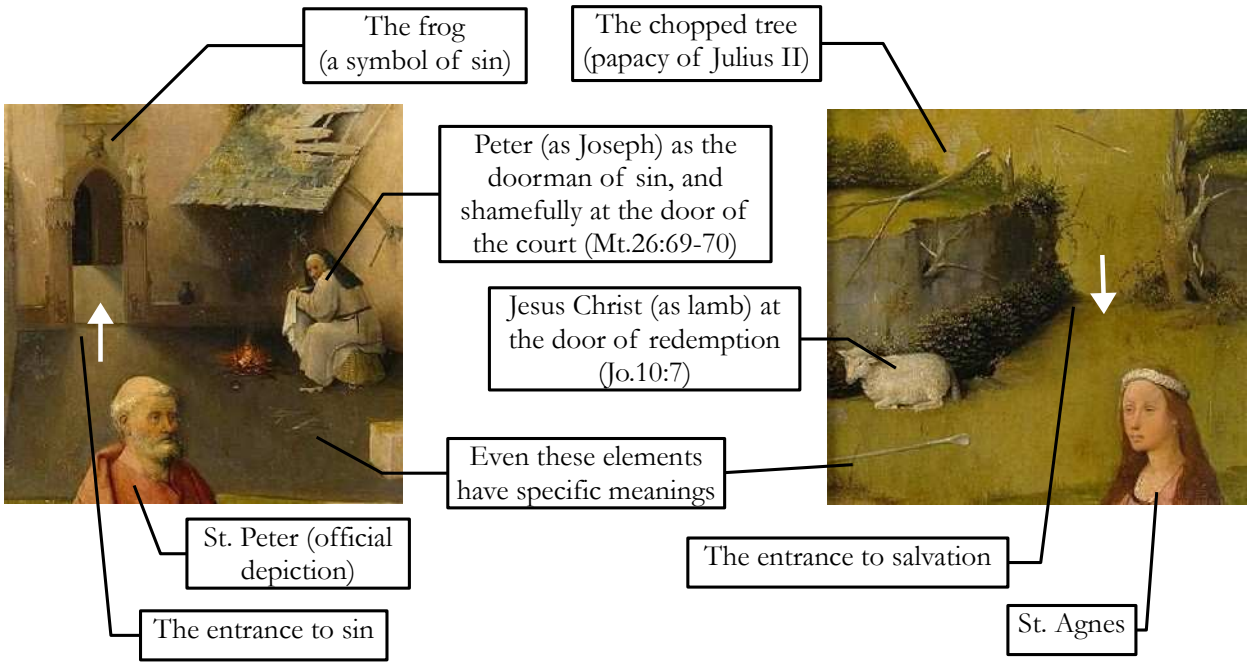
"Peter" (the popes) crucified upside down on a stylized forked tree

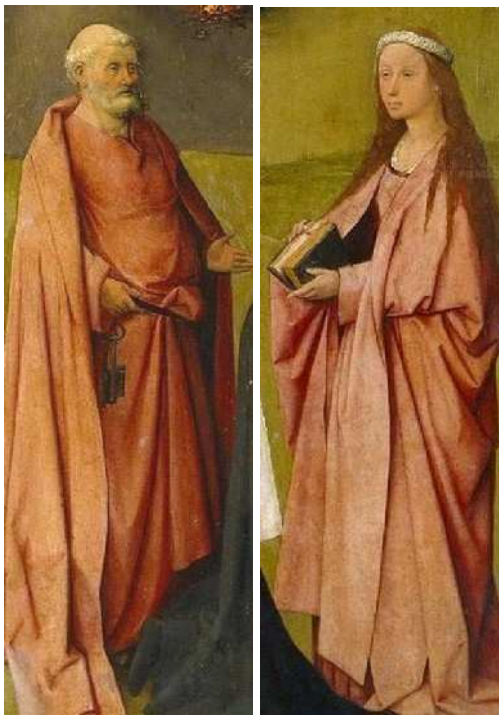
Sandro Botticelli
The Punishment of Korah (det.)

The two figures draw the forked oak of Pope Sixtus IV. Symbolizing the tense relationship between the Medici and the Rovere, the complex meaning of this fresco is presented elsewhere.

Examples from the *Adoration of the Magi* (Jheronimus Bosch)

The symmetric connections between the side panels


The frog
(a symbol of sin)
The chopped tree
(papacy of Julius II)
Peter (as Joseph) as the doorman of sin, and shamefully at the door of the court (Mt.26:69-70)
Jesus Christ (as lamb) at the door of redemption (Jo.10:7)
Even these elements have specific meanings
St. Peter (official depiction)
The entrance to sin
The entrance to salvation
St. Agnes



Peter symbolizes here the lust of the high clergy of the Renaissance. Considering Bosch's peculiar sense of humour, the open book is probably a defense, and one can anticipate a painful end.

In the central panel, the "stable" represents the decadent Vatican, including the dungeons of the Inquisition.

Example from the *Lisbon Altarpiece* (Nuno Gonçalves)

St. Peter

The two keys are actually just one (forked), supposedly honouring the Rovere Pope Sixtus IV.

(det.)

The addition of a cat-demon reinforces the satire.

The skeletal "glove" discreetly suggests the presence of Death.

Examples from the *Adoration of the Magi* (Sandro Botticelli)

Pope Sixtus IV

Cosimo de Medici (rev.)

Sarcastic forked trees

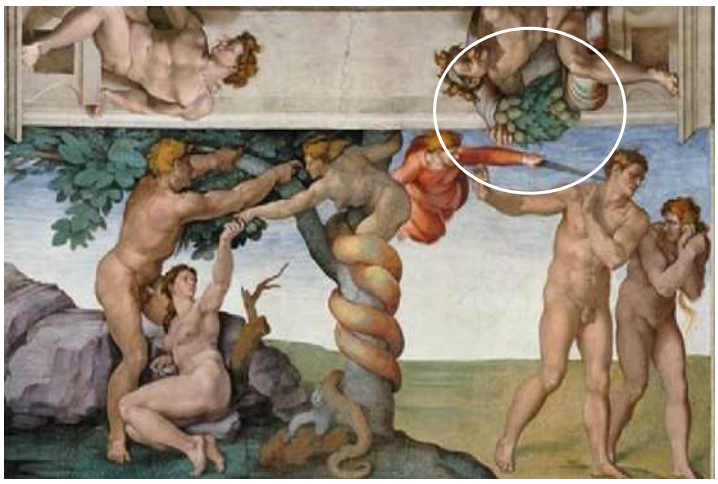
The wolf is a traditional pejorative symbol of the papacy.

The figure of Joseph was often used to conceal criticisms regarding Peter (the papacy). In this case, the objects represent his genitalia (the lust of the high clergy).

Example from the *Madonna of the Meadow* (Giovanni Bellini)

Alluding to Julius II, the forked
trees form the letters VA = Vaticano, Vatican
(the letters T, I, C, N and even O are also there).
The black eagle underlines the satire.

Examples from the Sistine Chapel (Michelangelo)



The acorns of Julius II subtly introduced in the (forked) tree of sin.

A suspicious depiction of acorns, possiby with a sexual connotation.

Examples from the *Portrait of Julius II* (Raphael)

The acorn on the left reflects a long I (Iulius, in latin), and two bleeding wounds (II)

The throne is also a forked oak with the acorns. The one on the right has a detailed shape of a nipple, denouncing the lust of the high clergy.

The sinister bearded "face" indicates the true nature of Julius II, contradicting the merciful portrait of *il Terrible*.

The crossed keys form a denunciatory saltire, and also crossed bones, presenting the papacy as a symbol of death.

One of the armrests is bent, symbolizing the lack of rectitude.

The handkerchief is a decapitated head. The rings suggest the opulence of the Holy See. The absence of rings in the middle finger may contain an additional satire.

The large "vagina" presents the papacy of the Renaissance as a great prostitute.
The same concept by Caravaggio: Jesus plays the role of Martha, lecturing a sarcastic version of Mary Magdalene (Peter as a prostitute).

About these devices, there was even a competition between Michelangelo and Raphael, each one trying to be the most audacious. Raphael would die in 1520, and a few years later Michelangelo ended all doubts with his *Last Judgment*, in the very heart of the "Church of Peter".

Thus, by using numerous ingenious artifices, several artists managed to express their criticism regarding the high clergy and its Inquisition, here represented by the Rovere Popes.

In a wider scope, the presented examples demonstrate the versatility of the artistic method developed in those centuries, based on ambiguities and in the ability to associate and conceal messages, which ultimately were declarations of free thought.

[2012]

© - Available for consultation

Rembrandt and the art of compromise

Paulo Martins Oliveira

There are several reasons to admire the art of the Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669).

One of them, perhaps the most elusive, lies in the ability to create ambiguous images, which synthesize different issues through the management of compromise solutions, following the earlier examples of other Dutch and Flemish masters, as well as from Italy and other countries.

About Rembrandt's skills, an illustrative example can be seen in *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee* (1633), in which is depicted a biblical scene (Mk.4:35-41).

To decipher the real meaning of this picture, it is necessary to take into account that the Netherlands were then battling for their independence.

For this greater cause, both the Dutch Protestants and the Catholics should overcome their differences and work together, fighting side by side against the Spaniards.

The storm represents the war, and the boat is actually an allegorical composition, which blends two smaller boats sailing in opposite directions (the Dutch Protestants and Catholics).

Ambiguously, they have a common rudder and share the same mast, which is strategically placed between the boats, having two autonomous sails. Its base is hidden by the breaking waves, and at its top the mast forms the cross of Christ, i.e. the common reference that aggregates the several ropes linking the two boats.

Like the flag above, also a rope with a subdivided tip flutters in the wind, underlining the same message.

This idea of alliance was elegantly inserted by Rembrandt in other works, such as the painting usually known as *The Night Watch* (Amsterdam), which actually celebrates the common effort of the Dutch in defending their country.

Detail of the *Night Watch*, or *The Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch*.
In addition, a Catholic leader (in yellow) supporting the Protestant commander (in black).

The bright woman holds the symbols of the Arquebusiers. Beyond that, she is Saskia (Rembrandt's wife), representing the rich and prosperous homeland, which must be defended by all Dutch.

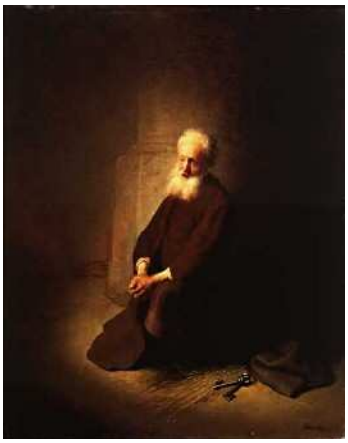
On the opposite side, the darkened and frightened dog symbolizes the Spanish Habsburgs. Since Jheronimus Bosch, the dog systematically represents the Habsburgs in the Netherlands.

The same concern for unity between Protestants and Catholics is clearly visible in the painting *Two Old Men Disputing* (Melbourne), which indeed represents St. Peter and St. Paul, always arguing, yet complementary.

Rembrandt
Two Old Men Disputing [Peter and Paul]
St. Peter is a key reference for Catholics, as St. Paul is for Protestants. With his particular sense of humour, Rembrandt depicted St. Peter in a "papal throne", trying to lecture St. Paul.

If separated, both St. Paul (the Dutch Protestants), and St. Peter (the Dutch Catholics) will face same destiny: the subjugation.

Rembrandt
St. Paul in Prison
(Stuttgart)



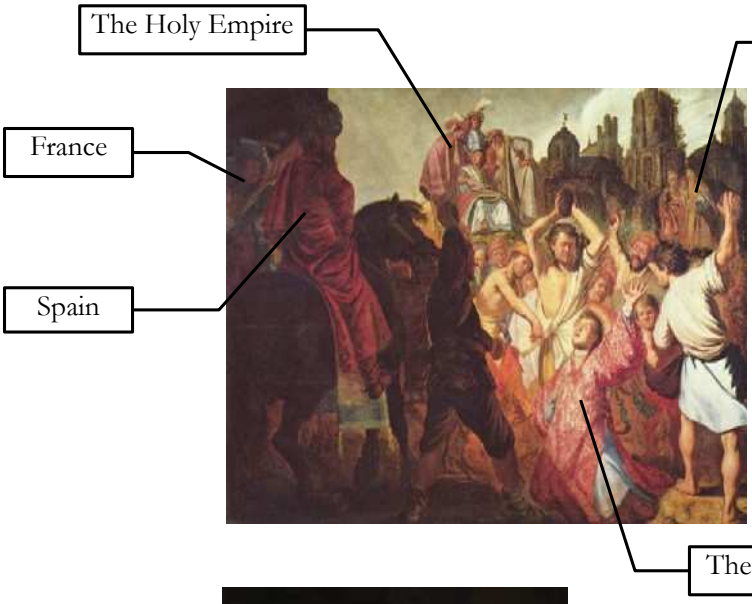
Rembrandt
St. Peter in Prison
(Jerusalem)

By this way, Rembrandt consistently expressed the need for communion, which lacked in the past, as can be seen in the works of Pieter Bruegel, in the previous century.

Pieter Bruegel
Detail from the *Fight between Carnival and Lent* (Vienna),
satirizing the internal conflicts between Dutch Protestants
and Dutch Catholics (16th century).
.

Rembrandt is deeply nationalist, and one can find numerous allegorical references throughout his works.

Expressing the defeats and hardships (examples):



Rembrandt
The stoning of St. Stephen
(Lyon)

Rembrandt
Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem
(Amsterdam)

Expressing the revival of the nationalistic enthusiasm and hope (examples):

Rembrandt
The raising of Lazarus
(Los Angeles)
After some important defeats, such as the loss of Breda to the Spanish troops (1625), in the 30s the Dutch nationalists recovered their impetus in a decisive manner.

The hairstyle forms the head of a Dutch lion.

Most likely, the supposed Jewish writing compose a Dutch nationalist message

Rembrandt
Belshazzar's Feast
(London)

The left cup was slightly deformed to represent the head of a dog (the Habsburgs).

The Babylonian king represents the Spanish monarch.

The circle is a traditional artistic symbol of the unwanted union with Spain (often used by Bruegel, for instance).

As seen, there are symmetrical connections between the two sides of the picture, as well as hierarchical relations on each side, valuing the Dutch elements.

In fact, the nationalist issue is a matter of utmost importance to the artist, who instead of obvious and direct depictions opted for more elaborate creations, challenging the viewer to interpret his designs.

But besides these great political causes, also in more everyday issues Rembrandt used the same ability to find ingenious compromise solutions.

This is the case of *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* (The Hague), originally commissioned for the Amsterdam Guild of Surgeons.

Rembrandt
The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp

In this picture, Dr. Tulp performs a dissection of a human body, but the portrayed audience is not constituted by inexperienced students, but fellow colleagues and prominent figures of the city.

Therefore Rembrandt had to be skilled in managing sensitivities, like Nicolaes Eliaszoon Pickenoy in the past, who in 1619 painted the precedent picture of this kind for the Guild, titled *The Osteology Lesson of Dr. Sebastiaen Egbertsz* (Amsterdam).

Nicolaes Eliaszoon Pickenoy
The Osteology Lesson of Dr. Sebastiaen Egbertsz

Actually, this earlier work doesn't even resemble a lesson, and because of that the subsequent painting, now by Rembrandt, stands out even more for its audacity and ingenuity.

Thus, Rembrandt depicted Dr. Tulp as a teacher, but not only he isn't looking at anyone, but also no one is actually looking neither at Dr. Tulp, nor at the corpse, as demonstrated by a careful analysis of the directions of the gazes.

So, there is depicted a teacher, but no one is being lectured.

This is just another example of the broad resources of Rembrandt, whose creations should be considered in a dynamic perspective.

[2012]

© - Disponibilizado para consulta

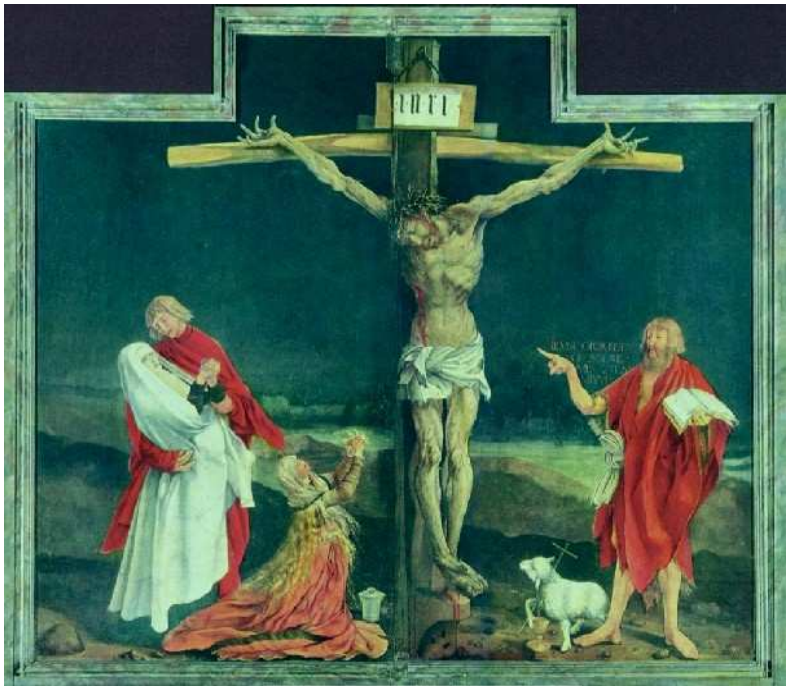
O engenho de Matthias Grünewald

Paulo Martins Oliveira

O pintor germânico Matthias Grünewald (c.1470-1528) é uma das referências de um conceito artístico caracterizado pela versatilidade, que se materializa na composição de narrativas dinâmicas.

É neste aspecto que, verdadeiramente, mais se distingue o *Retábulo Isenheim*, executado por Grünewald e do qual se realça o painel da *Crucificação*.

Associando vários recursos e expedientes, trata-se de uma imagem que se desenvolve em leituras sucessivas, utilizando as mesmas figuras.



Matthias Grünewald
A Crucificação / Retábulo Isenheim

Assim, essa pintura começa por expressar a dualidade de Cristo, um tema caro a vários artistas do período Humanista, e que simboliza também a ambivalência de cada um, bem como a necessidade de aperfeiçoamento.

No caso de Jesus, o sacrifício supremo e a passagem de um estado para outro reflectem-se no facto de as partes superior e inferior da cruz estarem viradas em direcções opostas. Aqui, a inferior corresponde à dimensão divina, pois é por onde escorre o sangue, simbolicamente recolhido no cálice do cordeiro (tradicional sinónimo de Cristo).

Matthias Grünewald
A Crucificação / Retábulo Isenheim (dets.)

O cordeiro é também um atributo de S. João Baptista, pois foi este quem a dado momento surge baptizando Cristo, conduzindo-o assim para a Sua missão, que haveria de culminar precisamente no sacrifício redentor na cruz.

Como se observa no lado direito da pintura de Grünewald, o personagem de barbas simboliza o Baptista, identificável não só pela proximidade do cordeiro, mas também porque, debaixo do manto vermelho, nele se vislumbram as características vestes grosseiramente feitas de pele de camelo (Mc.1:6), seu atributo, e que viriam a inspirar os hábitos castanhos dos humildes e conversores franciscanos.

O Baptista é na verdade um símbolo do reencontro com Deus, independentemente da missão reservada a cada um.

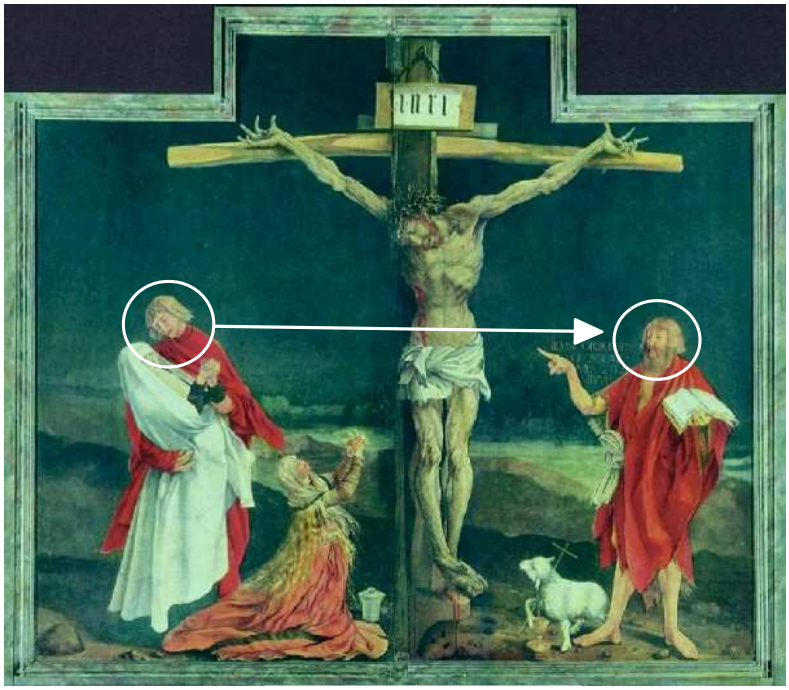
A mesma ideia de evolução encontra-se nas outras personagens, desde logo em Maria Madalena, que se arrepende das suas faltas, representadas por monstros que integram o vestido.

Matthias Grünewald
A Crucificação / Retábulo Isenheim (dets.)

Maria Madalena confirma o se arrependimento ao projectar-se e fundir-se na figura da Virgem Maria, imediatamente atrás.

Matthias Grünewald
A Crucificação / Retábulo Isenheim (det.)

Por seu turno, essa figura compósita (que prioritariamente representa a Virgem) é amparada pelo apóstolo João (Jo.19:27), o qual vai também evoluir e projectar-se no lado oposto, no agora mais velho João Evangelista, com o Livro que o simboliza e que expressa o epílogo, pois foi o autor do *Apocalipse*, com que termina a *Bíblia*.

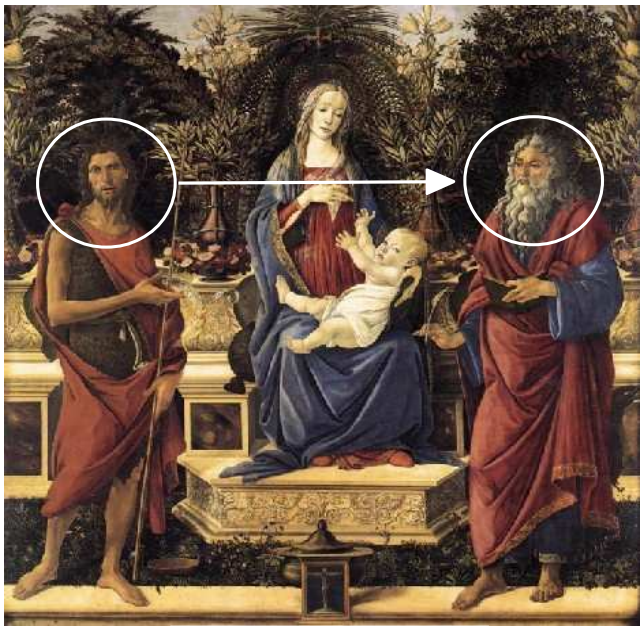


Matthias Grünewald
A Crucificação / Retábulo Isenheim

Como já se percebeu, este é também um personagem compósito, fundindo-se no já referido João Baptista, o qual apadrinha igualmente esta evolução.

De facto, na arte daquele período, a figura do Baptista foi utilizada de modo versátil para simbolizar a progressão para um estado mais elevado.

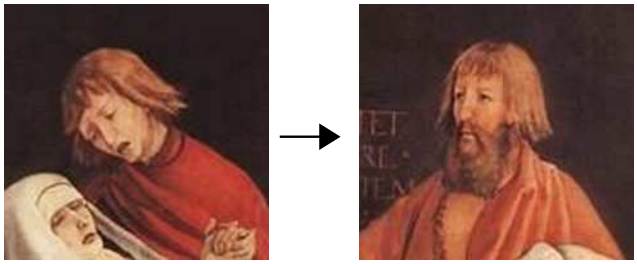
Por exemplo, no *Altar Bardi* (Berlim), Sandro Botticelli representou o santo com uma face de sátiro (mesmo o cabelo na testa sugere dois cornos), ou seja, estando no domínio do pecado, onde precisamente actua o conversor, resgatando as almas dos vivos e reencaminhando-as no caminho cristão.



Sandro Botticelli
Altar Bardi

Nesta dinâmica, o próprio Baptista surge projectado e simbolicamente evoluído no outro lado de Cristo, em concreto na figura de João Evangelista, com o Livro que representa o epílogo.

Tornando à obra de Grünewald, verifica-se como foi subtilmente introduzida ainda uma outra evolução, que expressa o desejo de aperfeiçoamento moral do próprio pintor, bem consciente das suas falhas.



Matthias Grünewald
A Crucificação / *Retábulo Isenheim* (dets.)

Auto-retrato simbólico de
Grünewald, como S. Sebastião

Nesta leitura subjacente, as setas de S. Sebastião simbolizam o castigo pelos pecados do próprio artista. Num outro exemplo, o também germânico Lucas Cranach pune-se no papel de ladrão crucificado.

Retrato realista e
retrato simbólico
de Lucas Cranach

Efectivamente, os artistas eram à época actores frequentes das respectivas obras, fazendo-se incluir nas narrativas, na maior parte dos casos através de representações simbólicas que os sugeriam.

Como é também verificável por exemplo nas obras de pintores como Bosch, Leonardo ou Michelangelo, existem pois camadas de significado eminentemente pessoais, que os artistas introduziam tomando partido do próprio método versátil que exploravam.

É assim o caso de Matthias Grünewald, que ainda acrescentou no mesmo painel outros assuntos, de que são reflexo o X no braço esquerdo da cruz, o demónio no vestido da própria Virgem, o vaso de Madalena, ou mesmo a posição deliberada de alguns dos seus dedos.

Em todo o caso, no âmbito deste contributo, um tópico que aqui deve ser realçado diz respeito à constante ameaça do pecado, já que as mencionadas projecções evolutivas não eliminam as faltas e as tentações, antes as tornam mais perceptíveis aos próprios, o que é visível nos vestuários dos personagens, em especial no do Baptista/Evangelista/Grünewald.

Mesmo relativamente a Cristo, apenas após a morte Ele abandonará a condição humana e falível, o que Grünewald simbolizou numa outra pintura que faz igualmente parte do *Retábulo Isenheim*.

Apesar de habitualmente intitulado como *A Ressurreição*, este outro painel é na verdade uma fusão desse momento com uma transfiguração e a ascensão final aos céus.

Matthias Grünewald
A Ressurreição / Retábulo Isenheim

Por sua vez, os "soldados" também representam os apóstolos por sobreposição, e aquele em primeiro plano e mais torturado é, por um lado, Pedro (numa subtil e habitual crítica ao Vaticano), e por outro Saulo/Paulo, no momento em que foi confrontado pela luz divina (Act.9:3-9).

Nesta imagem de síntese, feita de contínuas associações, Cristo abandona a Sua dimensão humana e falível, o que é simbolizado por demónios [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] que descem em turbilhão pelas vestes.

Todavia, para a Humanidade isso não implica o fim do mal e da tentação, pois Lúcifer [6] e seus aliados [7] ainda não foram derrotados, espreitando ameaçadoramente atrás de Cristo.

Em conclusão, tal como outros artistas seus contemporâneos, Matthias Grünewald procurou alargar os horizontes da ambiguidade, de modo a construir narrativas que se associam e desmultiplicam.

[2012]

© - Available for consultation

Bosch, the surdo canis

Paulo Martins Oliveira

When designing his elaborate multilayered paintings[1], Jheronimus van Aken "Bosch" harmonized various sources and inspirations[2].

One of the most influential was the humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam (Desiderius Erasmus), who became for a time practically neighbor of the Van Aken's workshop, in the city of 's-Hertogenbosch.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)

The hollow rock [A] is actually an ecclesiastical mitre (or miter), that is to say the Holy Church imposing its dogmas and discipline over subservient believers[3].

Next to it, there is a more liberal view on the Church (advocated by Erasmus), symbolized by the diversified and free birds [B].

1 A brief illustrative example of this concept is presented in the article "Reviewing Konrad Witz – an ingenious artist of the 15th century".
2 His works are decoded in the book *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*.
3 For more on this composite element, see the article "The egg of Bosch", in *Separata 1*.

Furthermore, Jheronimus Bosch also sought inspiration from Erasmus to integrate political layers into his paintings[4]. Thus, from the famous collection of ancient maxims and proverbs organized by the humanist scholar (*Adagia*, 1500), Bosch adapted and illustrated the Latin saying "surdo canis" (deaf dog), which Erasmus had equated to "surdo fabulam narras" (talking to the deaf)[5].

This means the frustration of warning people who are "deaf", i.e. stubborn and reckless. A useful definition can be found in a book from 1814, titled *Proverbs chiefly taken from the Adagia of Erasmus* (entry 92): "Surdo canis - You are preaching to the deaf; to prepossessed and prejudiced ears; to persons so besotted and addicted to their vices, that they will not listen to you, though your advice be most suitable to them (…)".

In a first step, one can see that there is a natural correspondence between the meaning of "surdo canis" and Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

As will be better explained later on, the "surdo canis" itself is even present, with long ears that actually restrict its ability to listen.

Detail from the left panel

Detail from the right panel

As shown above, the malformed and penitent "dog" is symmetrically related to a pair of prejudiced ears on the other lateral panel, punishing there some of the "deaf" who, in the central panel, were so besotted and addicted that they could not listen to the voices of warning.

Details from the central panel

4 Bosch had a strong Dutch nationalist consciousness, despite having family roots in the Holy Empire (city of Aken, Dutch for Aachen). Specifically regarding the political layer, see the following articles and its infographics: "The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch", and "As Faces de Engelbert".

5 For example, in the edition of 1523 (Basel), the entry "surdo canis / surdo fabulam narras" can be found in page 141 (listed under the number lxxxvii); in the edition of 1643 see page 322, etc.

More specifically, Bosch uses the concept of "surdo canis" to metaphorically denounce the corruption and decadence promoted by the imperial Habsburgs in the once heavenly "Garden", i.e. the Burgundian Netherlands, especially the old Duchy of Brabant (which comprised parts of the modern Netherlands and Flanders).

The Garden of Earthly Delights
The political layer – overall sequence

Yesterday	Today	Tomorrow
The Burgundian Netherlands/ Brabant starting to become corrupt	The Burgundian Netherlands/ Brabant completely defiled	The inevitable punishment and doom

This multilayered triptych was symbolically undersigned and even dated from 1504[6], and five years later also Erasmus would refer in his *Praise of Folly* (English ed.1735, p.19):

"And there is a never failing observation made of the People of Brabant, that, contrary to the proverb of Older and Wiser, the more ancient they grow, the more Fools they are".

These words reflect the central panel of Bosch's triptych, which subtly links such recklessness with the indifference and even acceptance regarding the Habsburg domination, especially by the local elites, rapidly transformed into courtiers.

6 See the details in "As Faces de Engelbert", page 2.

The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)

The political layer: the imperial orb surrounded by the four capitals of Brabant (Brussels, Antwerp, Leuven, 's-Hertogenbosch).

The imperial orb

Later, also in the *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus would introduce veiled criticisms of the imperial Habsburgs when referring to kings and princes in general.

Examples

• Erasmus, same ed. p.134:

"For certainly none can esteem perjury or parricide a cheep purchase for a crown"

Jheronimus Bosch
Crowning of Thorns
Symbolic portraits

Anthonis van Aken

Jheronimus Bosch

Charles the Bold

Frederick III Habsburg, with the imperial insiginia on his shoulder

Engelbert II of Nassau, in the role of a Swiss accomplice

Maximilian Habsburg, with his gauntlet taking Christ's clothes (the sovereign Duchy of Burgundy, especially the prosperous Burgundian Netherlands/Brabant

The Habsburgs were regarded as the real culprits for the death of Charles the Bold, at the hands of the Swiss (1477). This was considered a parricide because Charles (after the episode of Neuss) was to be the father-in-law of Maximilian. Moreover, it also evokes the late and infamous Habsburg Emperor John the Parricide.

As for the accusation of perjury (violation of an oath), this relates to the infringement of the autonomy and guarantees of the Low Countries by Maximilian, especially after 1482 (following the death of Mary of Burgundy).

• Erasmus, p.134:
"Yet after their reign here they must appear before a Supreme Judge, and there be call'd to an exact account for the discharge of that great stewardship which was committed to their trust".

Jheronimus Bosch
The Last Judgment (det.frag. Munich)
The crowned holy emperor before the Supreme Judge

Frederick III Habsburg (Maximilian's father)
with the imperial crown

• Erasmus, p.135:
"They think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves in the duty of governing, if they do but ride constantly a hunting, breed good race-horses, sell places and offices to those courtiers that will give most for them"[7].

Detail from the *The Hunts of Maximilian*
(set of tapestries)

Representation of Maximilian in the *Deutschen Kaiser*, as a jousting knight, symbolizing his particular appreciation for this kind of sports

7 In the same way, the references to "Popes" (pages140-144) are clearly directed to the ruling Julius II.

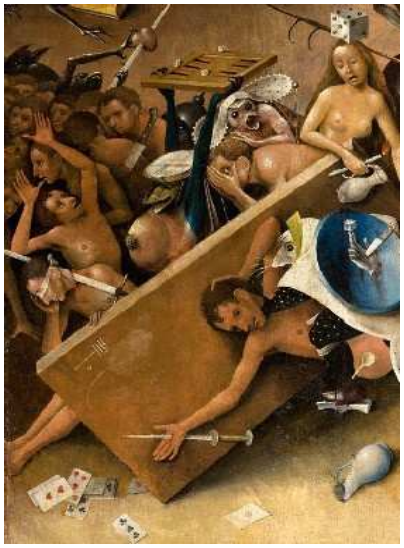
Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights
The reversed hunt, as an infernal punishment

The jousting between an armoured ship (Maximilian) and a worthy spoonbill (the Dutch national bird)

Due to the hunts (and the use of war dogs), aggressive dogs became a symbol of the Habsburg domination in the Dutch and Flemish territories. In some cases Bosch combined such dogs with the concept of "surdo canis" (as will be exemplified later).

Returning the *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus focuses his criticism also on the selfish and futile courtiers.

• Erasmus, p.137:
As soon as they are dress they must go to break-fast; and when that is done, immediately to dinner. When the cloth is taken away, then to cards, dice, tables [board games], or suchlike diversion. After this, they must have one or two afternoon banquets, and so in the evening to supper. When they have supp'd then begins the game of drinking".



Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights
The third panel complements the central one by showing more details of the great party, in the form of the inevitable punishments (cards, dice, board games, banquets, drinking…)

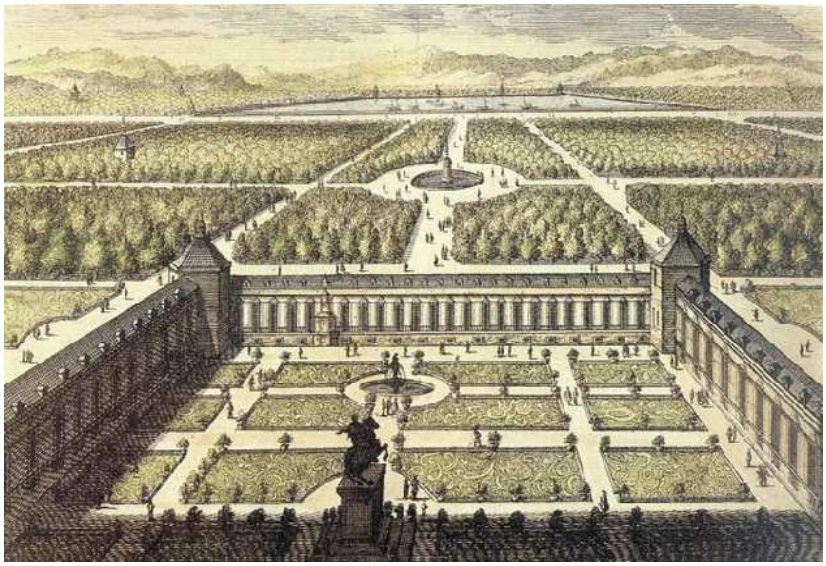
Once again it is possible to observe a reciprocal influence between the subtle writings of Erasmus and the denunciations encrypted by Jheronimus Bosch[8], whose *Garden* illustrates the infected situation of the Burgundian Netherlands, having its epicenter in the Palace of Coudenberg (Brussels).

Following precise symbolic codes, this is a sarcastic depiction of the Palace of Coudenberg and its great garden, currently the Parc de Bruxelles/Warandepark, or, in other words,the elusive Garden of Earthly Delights.

The Palace of Coudenberg and its gardens (buildings destroyed by a fire in 1731)

8 The *Adagia* of Erasmus is dated from 1500; Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* from 1504; and the *Praise of Folly* from 1509. Moreover, Erasmus held painters in the highest regard, precisely because they were using images to express the same surreptitious views of the humanist scholar.

This landmark was an important inspiration for the construction of the Buen Retiro Palace (Madrid), and the Palace of Versailles (and their gardens).



Buen Retiro

Versailles

Later in the 16th century, Pieter Bruegel (also born in Brabant) would reinvent Bosch's concepts, in order to develop new works with the same objective of denouncing the Habsburg domination[9].

The dominant Pacace of Coudenberg
Examples of metaphorical depictions by Pieter Bruegel:
The Dark Day
The Magpie on the Gallows
The Hay Harvest

Pieter Bruegel, *The Peasant Wedding*

Symbolic portraits of Pieter Bruegel

The stabbed Burgundian saltire

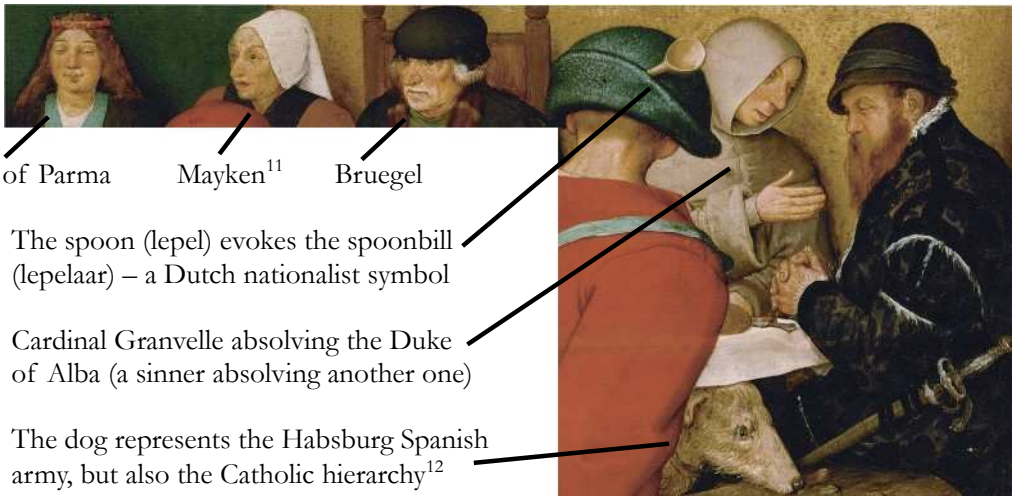
The Duke of Alba and his "dog"

9 The works of Pieter Bruegel are truly a compendium of ingenious nationalist devices, in large part adapting Bosch's solutions.

Bruegel considered the political union with the Habsburg Spain as an unwanted marriage (Spain as an expensive and futile wife). The famous wedding is actually a symbolic representation of the Palace of Coudenberg and its courtiers.

In penitence for his own personal sins and sells, the painter takes part in the banquet in a prominent position, always by means of a symbolic and insinuating character[10].

Symbolic portraits - detail



Margaret of Parma — Mayken[11] — Bruegel

The spoon (lepel) evokes the spoonbill (lepelaar) – a Dutch nationalist symbol

Cardinal Granvelle absolving the Duke of Alba (a sinner absolving another one)

The dog represents the Habsburg Spanish army, but also the Catholic hierarchy[12]

Pieter Bruegel
The Triumph of Death (det.)

Cardinal Granvelle, who bought several Bruegel's paintings.

The leaders of the Habsburg repression in the Low Countries (mid-16th century)[13].

10 On this matter, see for instance "The Sistine Chapel and the new Jeremiah", and "The L(eonardo) and the S(alai)".
11 Bruegel included his wife in this expiatory representation, as Bosch had introduced several symbolic depictions of his wife (Aleid).
12 The dog is visually related to the religious character above. A similar device (by Michelangelo) is presented in the article "The Sistine Chapel and the new Jeremiah", note 8).
13 After 1567 the Duke of Alba (sent by Philip II) became the main symbol of the Habsburg repression. This could also explain why Bruegel eliminated the "h" from his original name (Brueghel), in the same manner that "Bosch" has dropped his original family name "van Aken" (from Aken/Aachen, the historical capital of the Holy Empire).

Also Bruegel's son Pieter the Younger will recreate this concept, as can be seen for instance in *The Peasant Wedding Dance*, in which the "courtiers" enjoy the party at Coudenberg, whereas the real peasants pay their taxes to the "bride" (Habsburg Spain).

Pieter Bruegel the Younger
The Peasant Wedding Dance

The nationalist nonconformists urinating on the "palace"

The late Pieter Bruegel (as an Erasmus) in direct contrast to a courtier

Pieter the Younger and Jan Bruegel

The courtiers

Typical devilish faces[14].

The inclusion of the father and his two artist sons corresponds to a device earlier developed by Jheronimus Bosch, who systematically included several symbolic portraits of his two artist nephews[15].

The Garden of Earthly Delights
Accompanied by his two artist nephews, Bosch returns the gaze, standing behind a sarcastic version of the three Magi[16], led by Emperor Maximilian Habsburg.

14 This particular issue is contextualized in the book *The Devils of Art*.

15 Jan van Aken was mainly a sculptor, while Anthonis van Aken was a painter (Bosch's assistant). Also Bosch's deceased elder brother, father and grandfather were artists, and in some cases the symbolic depictions of Bosch and his two nephews intend to summarize all the family, mostly with a penitent, expiatory purpose (by using the imperial origin as a symbol of the current foreign domination, repression and corruption).

16 Bosch sarcastically explored the three Magi in numerous ways, because they were a main symbol of the Holy Empire (their relics are entombed in Cologne, a major imperial city located near the Burgundian Netherlands, like Aken/Aachen; see also note 17). Moreover, the three Magi were the counterpart to Bosch and his two nephews, as can be seen in the presented detail.

Bosch was indeed a major reference of this protean concept, having earlier experienced the palatial ambience of Brussels, accepting well-paid commissions from the Habsburgs as he delivered finished works to the Nassau (at that time the main courtiers of the imperials).

For this reason, the nationalist Jheronimus Bosch enciphered ingenious criticisms of his clients, as well as numerous symbolic, expiatory self-portraits throughout his works.

The Garden of Earthly Delights
In this multilayered representation, Bosch himself plays the role of an eternal hangover (the consequence of the dissolute party seen in the central panel). This materializes specific Biblical writings, among other issues carefully combined.

As detailed elsewhere, all characters play very precise roles in Bosch's paintings, in which the artist himself is a key element, in certain cases literally as a deaf dog (surdo canis).

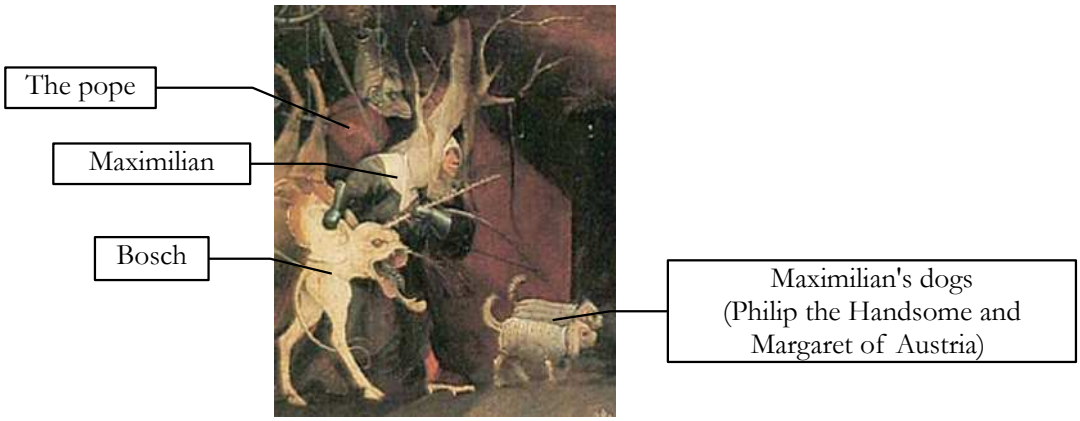
The deformed dog with long ears and hooves represents Bosch, as a pet of the "giraffe".

The spotted giraffe symbolizes Maximilian, with one of his dogs[17].

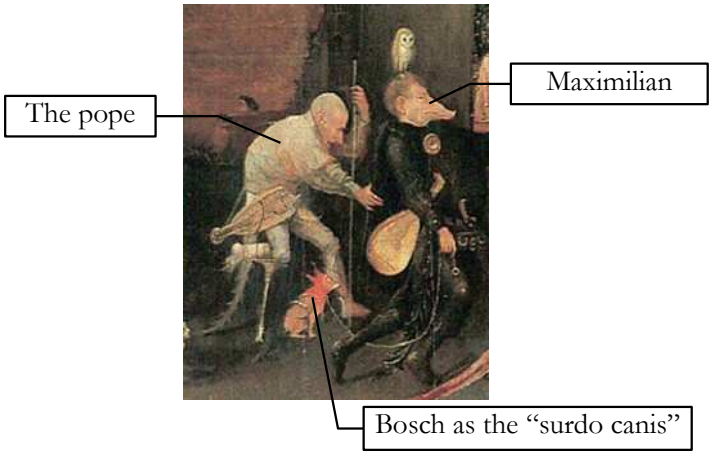
17 The spotted pattern was a surreptitious symbol of the vast imperial domination. On a few occasions, Bosch sought inspiration specifically from the coat of arms of the imperial city of Cologne (where his brother-and-law lived).

Indeed, Jheronimus Bosch constantly multiplied various types of self-portraits, often using long ears to symbolize his own guilty conscience.

As an example, in the *Temptation of St. Anthony* (also now fully decoded), Bosch pictured himself as a monstrous pet, which is following and being ominously influenced by Maximilian (accompanied by the pope).

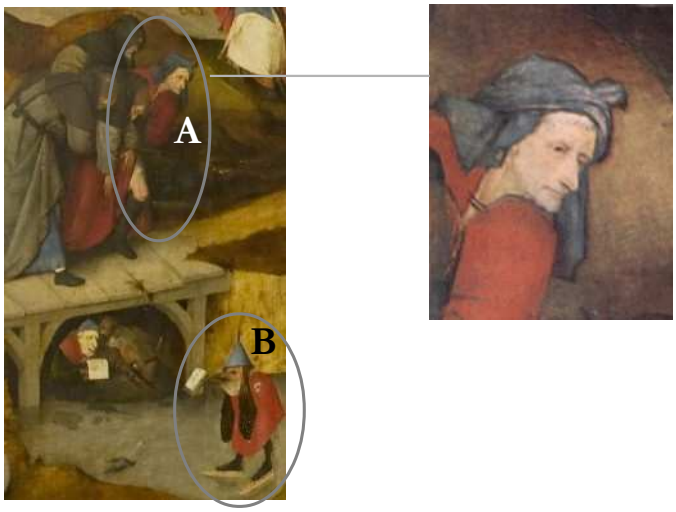


The group is replicated and reinvented immediately ahead:



St. Anthony being helped by Bosch and two other individuals (symbolizing the Van Aken family). In the same triptych, equally interesting is the relationship between the hard path of righteousness, and the easier and quicker path of sin.

Characters A/B personify Bosch and his constant struggle of conscience, among other superimposed issues and roles[18].



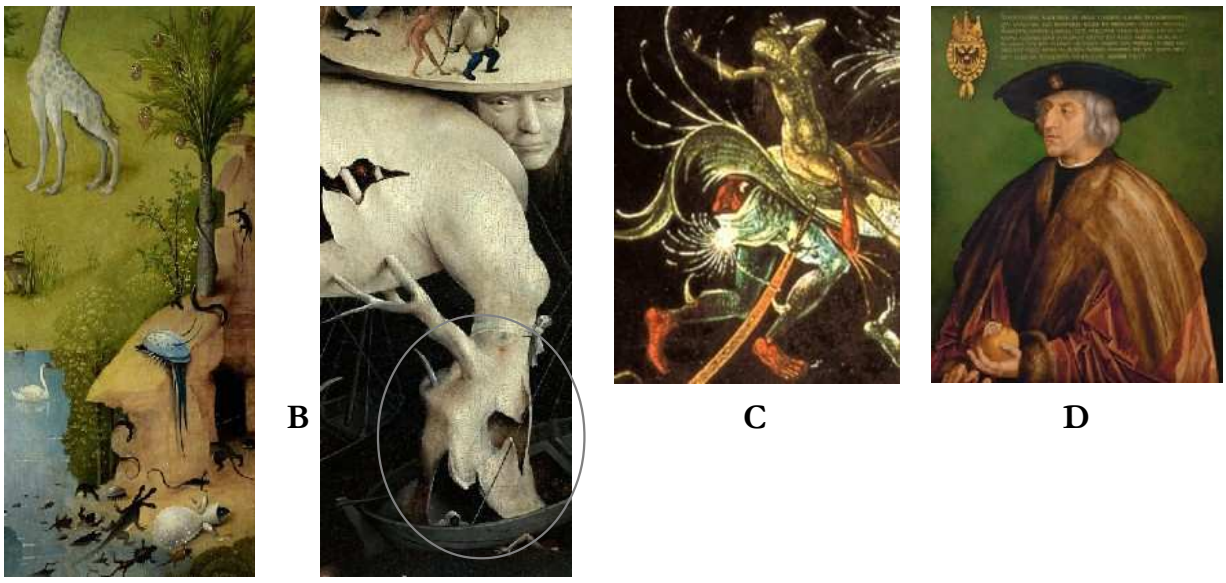
18 The skater ibis, with a forked twig on his "crown", represents not only the artist but also the pope and the emperor. In fact, forked elements symbolize both the Holy See (forked oak of Julius II) and the Holy Empire (double-headed eagle).

Constantly reinventing certain ideas, Bosch replicated in the two wing panels the same contrast between the fast path of sin and the much slower and expiatory course of rectitude.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Temptation of St. Anthony
(simbolic portraits of the artist)

In fact, in several cases the artist adapted his own features in multilayered characters, sometimes merging himself with Maximilian Habsburg, no less than the main expression of the imperial domination, and to whom Bosch and the rest of the population of 's-Hertogenbosch rendered a controversial homage.

Representations of Maximilian Habsburg, by Bosch and Dürer



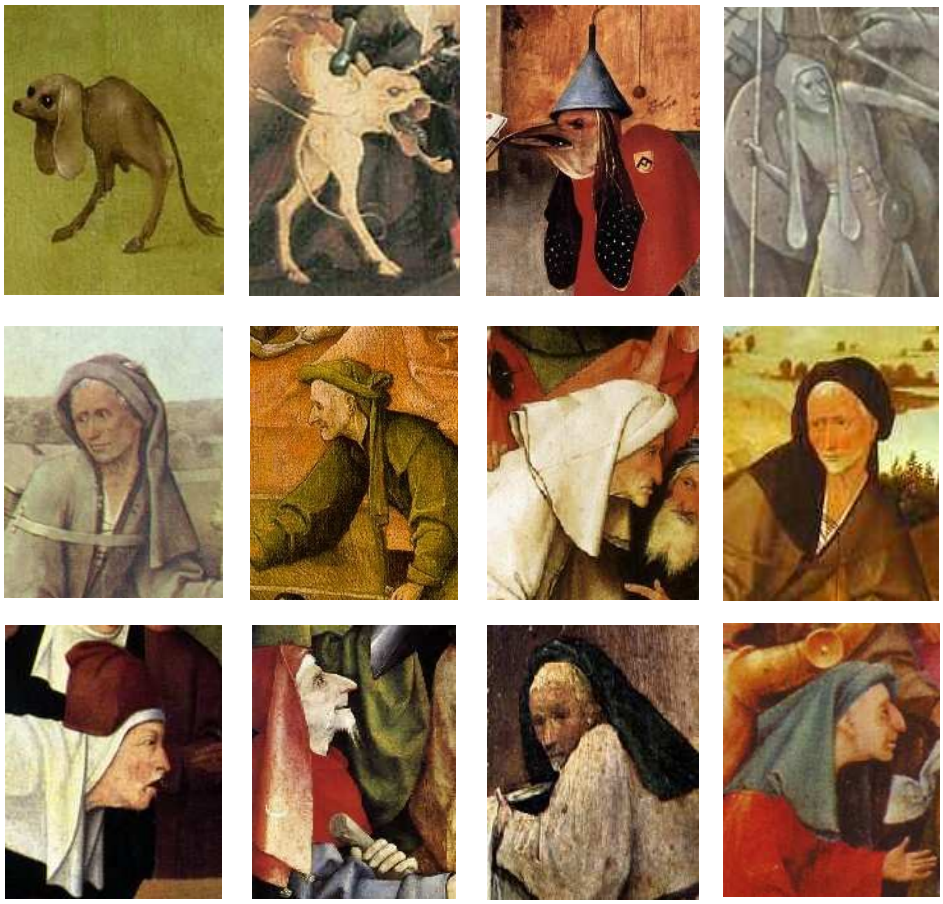
A **B** **C** **D**

A: Maximilian crowned with the tree of sin, having his ears corrupted by his own devils[19].
B: In this symmetrical detail, the devilish face of Maximilian has a vertical wound in place of an ear. The forked branch of his crown perforates Bosch's torso, punishing the artist.
C: Maximilian kidnapping Mary of Burgundy (by Bosch).
D: Official portrait of Maximilian (by Dürer).

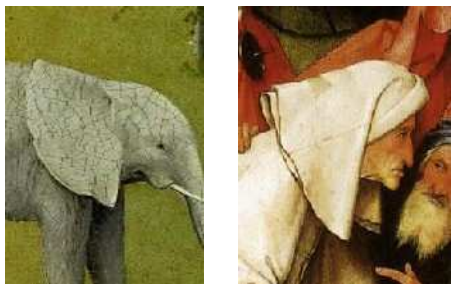
19 See the article "Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden".

In summary, due to the well-paid imperial commissions, Bosch saw himself as the greatest "surdo canis", reinventing abnormal "ears" to symbolize his successive falls in temptation.

Symbolic portraits of Bosch and Bosch merged with Maximilian
with abnormal ears, or visual synonyms (especially pieces of clothing)



One of many examples of the versatile use of ears by Bosch[20]



In fact, each of these multilayered depictions is accurately embedded in different narratives, being possible to compare Bosch's works to watchmaking.

20 In the first panel of the *Garden*, the tall "fountain" splits the composition in two: on the right there is the giraffe (Maximilian), the surdo canis (Bosch) and a rabbit (the lustful pope, in contrast to the swan – i.e. Christ, also Charles the Bold); On the left there is the elephant (Maximilian), the monkey (Bosch) and the fox (the devious pope, again in contrast to Christ/Charles the Bold, symbolized by the unicorn). All the other animals (the bear, etc.) integrate very precise narratives, which complement the aforementioned characters.

The Dutch creative artist became highly respected by his colleagues, including in Italy, and for a few reasons Michelangelo would honor Bosch as a "mother", placing him in the positive half of the *Last Judgment*[21], forgiven for his sins and finally hearing the true voices of goodness and reason.

2013

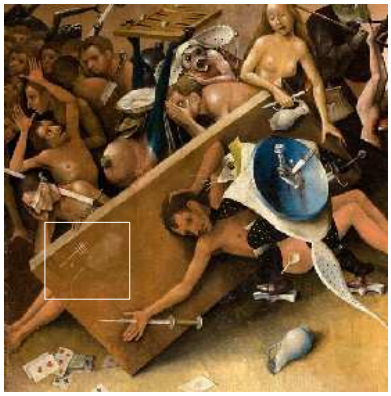
21 See the chapter "The divided ring", in *Leonardo x Michelangelo*.

© - Available for consultation

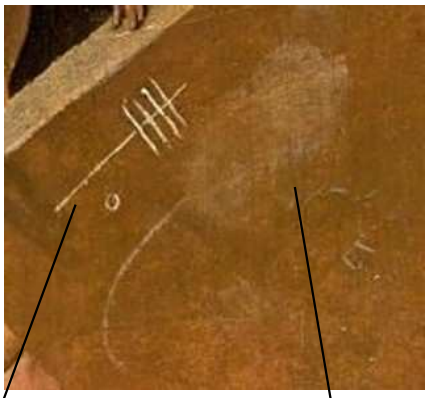
The dating and signature of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*

Paulo Martins Oliveira

In accordance with accurate symbolic codes, the *Garden of Earthly Delights* is allegorically dated and signed in the table depicted in the last panel[1].



(dets.)



Year: 1504

Signature: the rodent (combined) symbolizes Bosch himself[2].

Bosch delivered the *Garden* in 1504 to the Nassau, who at that time were the main deputies and courtiers of the imperial Habsburgs, in Brussels.

Example:
The surreptitious inverted N (Nassau)
The Garden of Earthly Delights, det.

1 For more on this particular issue, see from the same author the book *Jheronimus Bosch* (2012), pp.134-136, as well as the paper "As faces de Engelbert".

2 With different specific goals, there are several concealed creatures in this multilayered triptych (see the paper "Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden").

Assisted by his nephew Anthonis van Aken, Bosch encoded a large number of satires aimed at the imperial domination of the Burgundian Netherlands, using for this purpose a metaphorical allusion to the luxuriant gardens of the Palace of Coudenberg (Brussels)[3].

Probably coinciding with that delivery, Bosch received another commission in Brussels, this time from the Habsburg Philip the Handsome (as it is known by a document from 1504).

Related example: *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (det.), also by Bosch

The false Holy Family, surrounded by fake Magi (also identifiable)[4].

(det.) Allegorical depiction of Philip Habsburg (Philip the Handsome)

f, s (Filips de Schone,
Dutch for Philip the Handsome)
Philip as the fruit of the "original sin"
(the marriage between Maximilian
Habsburg and Mary of Burgundy)

3 See *Jheronimus Bosch* (2012), p.225. This issue is particularized in the papers "Bosch, the surdo canis", and "The Delights of Coudenberg". About the political consciousness of the artist see also "The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch".

4 About those "Magi" see *Jheronimus Bosch* (2012), pp.201-210, as well as the papers "Porquê 'Jheronimus' Bosch?" and "As faces de Engelbert".

Such well-paid commissions from the imperials led Bosch to encode also expiatory self-punishments throughout his paintings.

In conclusion, the *Garden of Earthly Delights* is actually a multilayered artwork, ultimately concealing the disappointment of the artist regarding the fate of the once heavenly Burgundian Netherlands, which during Bosch's youth were the political and economic head of the most prosperous country in Europe: the independent and proud Duchy of Burgundy.

2013

© - Available for consultation

Reviewing Konrad Witz

An ingenious artist of the 15th century

Paulo Martins Oliveira

Born about 1400, the Swiss-German painter Konrad Witz expressed and developed certain concepts recently presented by Flemish colleagues, especially Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden.

In fact, the works of Konrad Witz are surprisingly elaborate, since he designed elegant compromise solutions in order to merge different narratives.

A good example is *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, delivered in 1444 originally for the Cathedral of St. Peter (Geneva), being a picture in which the artist actually combined two different Biblical episodes, with contrasting objectives.

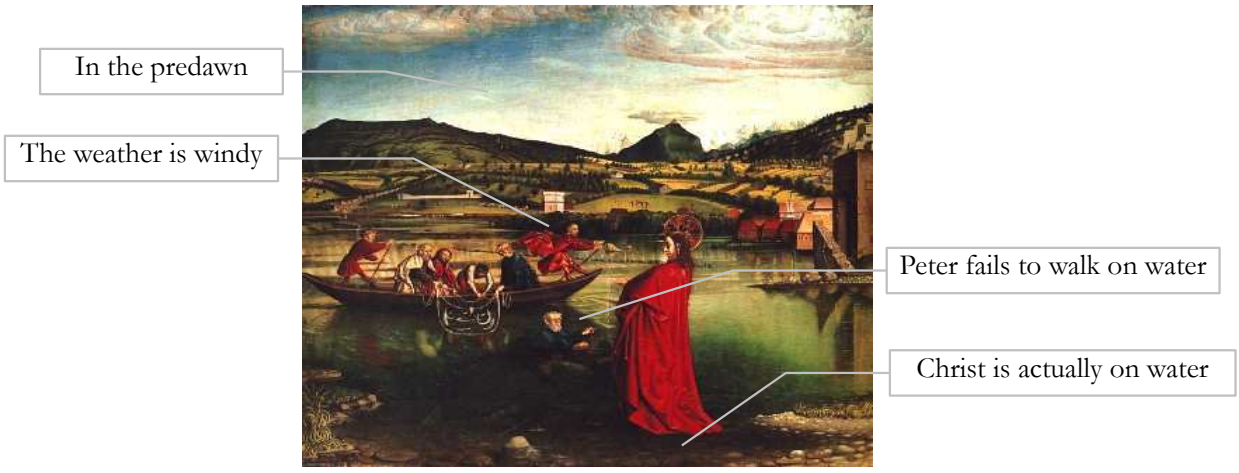
Both layers of meaning use the same setting: the Lake of Geneva, which is equated to the inland Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias).

Layer 1 (official), illustrating John 21:4-8:

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.
He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"
"No", they answered.
He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some". When they did, they were unable to haul the net because of the large number of fish.
Then the disciple whom Jesus loved [John] said to Peter, "It is the Lord" As soon as Peter hear him say, "It is the Lord", he wrapped is outer garment, for he had take it off, and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.

Layer 2 (subversive), illustrating Matthew 14:25-31:

Shortly before Dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost", they said, and cried out in fear.
But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I, don't be afraid".
"Lord, if it's you", Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water".
"Come", he said.
Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"
Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith", he said, "why did you doubt?"



With the drowning of Peter

and the sarcastic expression of Jesus, Konrad Witz intends to criticize the first pope, i.e. the current papacy and its Inquisition[1].

Another example is *The Liberation of St. Peter*, whose superficial layer illustrates the apostle escaping from prison with the help of an angel, some time after Christ's death and resurrection, as mentioned in the *Bible* (Acts 12:6-11).

However, in an underlying layer, Konrad Witz introduced the figure of Andrew, i.e. Peter's humble and disinterested brother, subtly used by several artists to make a contrast with the ambitious and repressive Peter himself[2].

This same exercise is visible in the aforementioned *Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, reinforcing its subversive message.

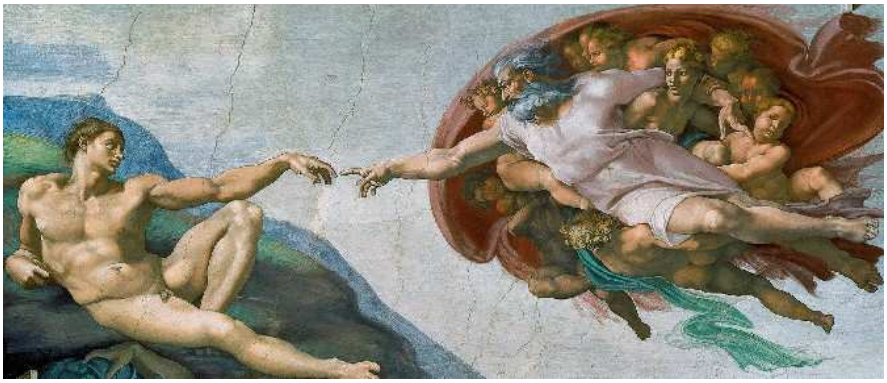
So, in the *Liberation of St. Peter*, this Saint is actually presented as a ominous guardian, just put to sleep and chained by an angel, while another rescues the meritorious Andrew from the pope's palace. In the centre of the painting there is the suggestion of Andrew's saltire, which was a major symbol among the broad-minded painters[3].

1 For more on this issue, see for instance the article "The (diabolic) oak of the Rovere Popes".
2 An expressive example is presented in the article "Leonardo's *Last Supper* and the three layers".
3 On this matter see the book *Leonardo x Michelangelo* (the *x* represents not only the rivalry between them, but also the common denunciatory perspective, symbolized by Andrew's saltire, in contrast to Peter's crossed keys.

This kind of device indicates the wit of Konrad Witz, whose ingenious and surreptitiously defiant works demonstrate that he belongs to a considerable group of freethinking artists, who worked for the Church while denouncing it at the same time.

The most audacious to do so will be Michelangelo Buonarroti, who also superimposed layers in order to address controversial issues.

Example: *The Creation of Adam*



• Layer 1 (official and superficial): the creation of Adam.
• Layer 2 (still official, but superimposed)[4]: the Father and the Son generating the Holy Spirit, which should inspire the cardinals.
• Layer 3 (subversive): The indolent Prodigal Son, finally embracing the higher mission given by the Father (implying the human and fallible dimension of Christ, especially before his baptism)[5].

By merging Adam and Christ, Michelangelo illustrated the Biblical connections between these two figures:

1Cor.15:22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

1Cor.15:45 The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam [Christ], a life-giving spirit.

Rom.5:14 … Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come [Christ; see also all chapter 5]

Rev.21:6 [says Christ] I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

Also for this reason, the Gospel of Luke traces the parentage of Jesus back to Adam (Lk.3:23-38), and in each of the four Gospels Christ is presented as being both the "Son of God" and the "Son of Man".

4 The use of layers of meaning also became commissioned in an institutional perspective, by merging two official messages. In such cases, artists often added subversive layers to the original combinations (see the example in note 8 of the article "The Sistine Chapel and the new Jeremiah").

5 The direct precedent of this depiction is *Venus and Mars*, by Botticelli (artists often created sequences and complements between each others' pictures). The human and fallible dimension of Christ was consistently and cleverly symbolized through the Prodigal Son, Mary Magdalene, John the Baptist, mythological characters, etc. (see the article "A Benção de Rafael", and "The Sistine Ceiling and the Holy Spirit).

In Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, the superimposed Christ is the decisive upgrade of the original man (in the same way that the New Testament improves and culminates the Old). However, in the subversive third layer of meaning, Christ himself progresses from a lower to a higher condition, as covertly defended by several humanist artists and scholars[6].

Associable example
Caravaggio
The Calling of St. Matthew (det.)

The illuminated "cross" represents the divine destiny of the dual Christ,
whereas his human dimension is in the shade, replicating Adam's famous gesture[7].

In conclusion, various artworks of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries are actually intellectual master-pieces, and Konrad Witz is one of the important links in this discreet but illustrious chain.

2013

6 See for instance *The Praise of Folly*, by Erasmus of Rotterdam: "And Christ himself, that he might the better relieve this folly, being the wisdom of the father, yet in some manner became a fool when taking upon him the nature of man, he was found in shape as a man". This text was written in 1509 and published in 1511, when Michelangelo was painting his ceiling (1508-1512), which helps to illustrate the context.

7 This complex painting is decoded in the article "O conceito dinâmico de Caravaggio".

© - Available for consultation

Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden

Paulo Martins Oliveira

Like other artists of his time, Jheronimus Bosch concealed devilish figures in paintings, aiming different purposes simultaneously[1].

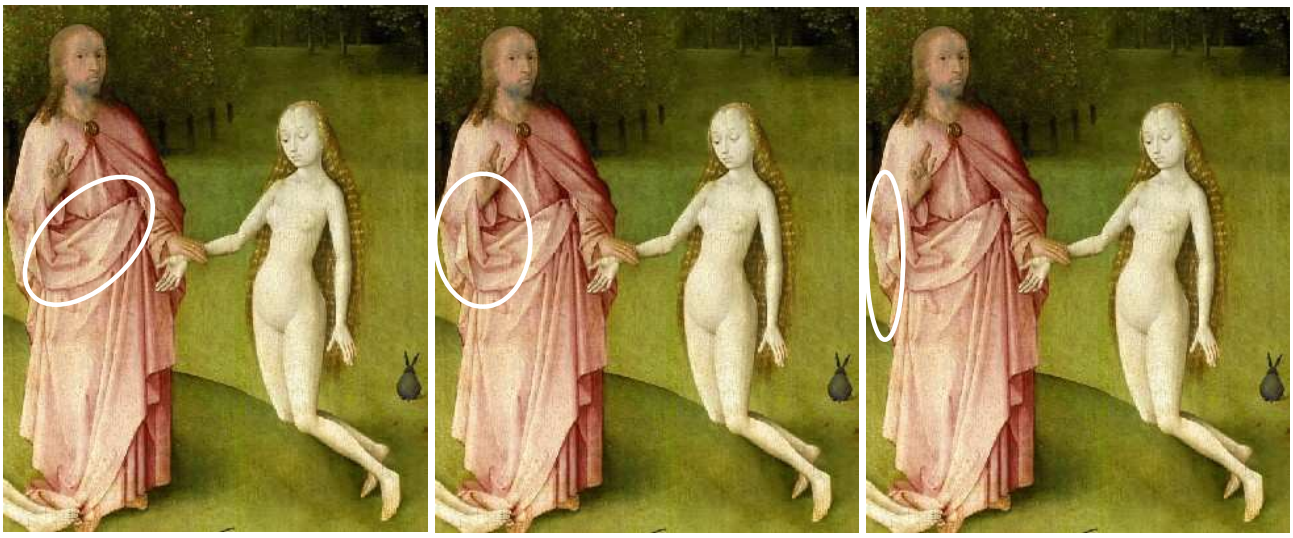
As an illustrative example, the first panel of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* hides some demons, each carefully interconnected with the respective superimposed story.

Thus, the lower part of the panel surreptitiously alludes to the controversial human dimension of Jesus, which was an important issue for the humanist freethinkers of the Renaissance.

For instance, Erasmus wrote in his *Praise of Folly*: "And Christ himself, that he might the better relieve this folly, being the wisdom of the father, yet in some manner became a fool when taking upon him the nature of man, he was found in shape as a man".

In this context, various painters encrypted a Christ much closer to mankind, filling a mysterious gap in the Gospels and bypassing the official interpretations of the Church[2].

Also Jheronimus Bosch concealed devilish faces (interconnected) to indicate the double reading on the figure of Christ, implying a tension between his two dimensions.



Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)

In this particular, Bosch adapted the earlier Arnolfini Portrait, in which Jan van Eyck had enciphered this issue[3].

Jan van Eyck
The Arnolfini Portrait

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (det.)

Moreover, the same detail from the *Garden of Earthly Delights* also relates to other works by Bosch[4].

"Adam" is John, the favorite apostle (Jn.20:21), here the best man of this symbolic marriage with "Eve" (Magdalene).

Jheronimus Bosch
St. John at Pamos (det.)

Jheronimus Bosch (copy)
Marriage Feast at Cana (det.)
Christ and Magdalene are the real groom and bride of this surreptitious wedding, of which John is again the best man.

However, the Christ of the multilayered *Garden* also represents the martyr Charles the Bold, who has his counterpart in the Anti-Christ/Emperor Maximilian Habsburg, in the opposite panel.

In the first panel, and besides Adam and Eve, "Charles" is flanked by two devils that symbolize the late Emperor Frederick III and his son and successor Maximilian Habsburg, which reflects the nationalist consciousness of Jheronimus Bosch[5].

This principle is replicated above, where a noble swan is also in between two monsters.

So, the fountain in the lake is actually a large devil, with a long crown and two arms[6].

The face

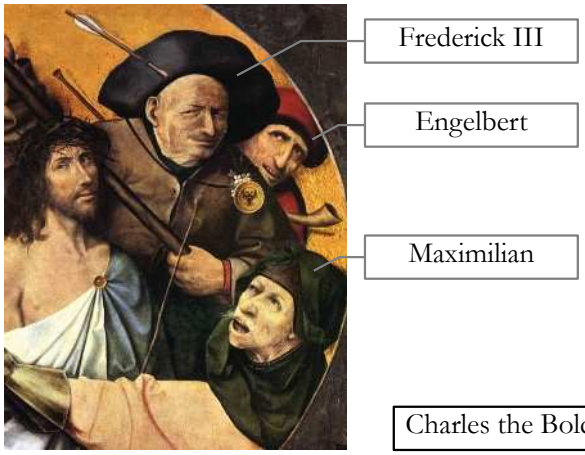
The crowned head

The full body

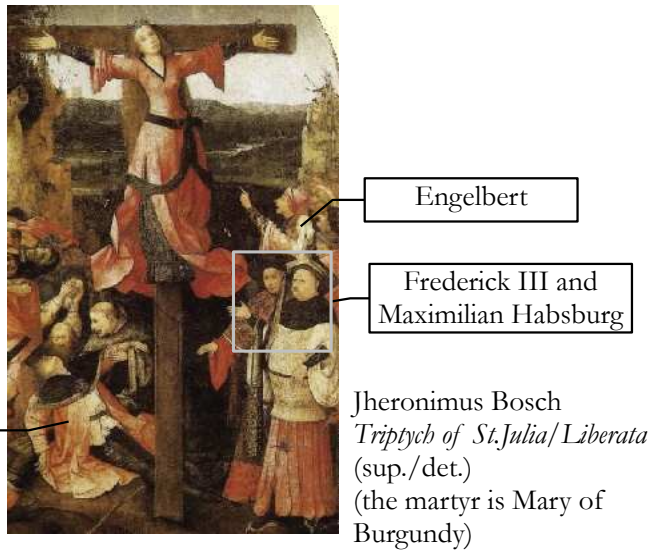
On the waterfront there is the other devil, more specifically a giant face crowned with a tree.

Following a very precise and consistent allegorical grammar, these two large demons symbolize again Emperor Frederick III and his heir Maximilian Habsburg, considered usurpers of the independent Duchy of Burgundy, until then governed from Bosch's native Burgundian Netherlands[7].

Other examples of symbolic depictions of
Frederick III and Maximilian, by Bosch



Jheronimus Bosch
Crowning with thorns (det.)
(the martyr is Charles the Bold)



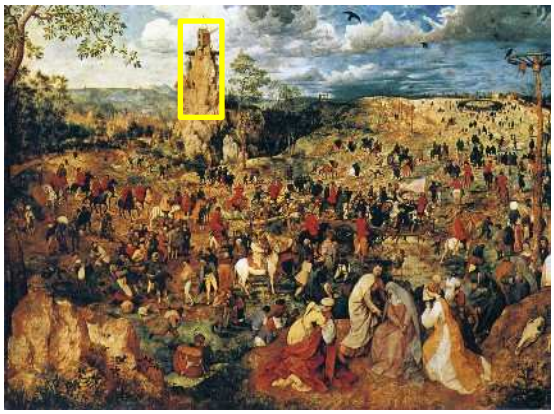
Jheronimus Bosch
Triptych of St.Julia/Liberata
(sup./det.)
(the martyr is Mary of
Burgundy)

In conclusion, these cases illustrate the ingenious versatility of this kind of art, being Jheronimus Bosch one of its most talented creators.

2013

Some other examples of devilish faces in artworks

Titian
The Pesaro Altarpiece



Pieter Bruegel
The Procession to Calvary

Rembrandt
Philosopher in meditation

NOTES

1 This device is presented and contextualized in the book *The Devils of Art*. As for the correct name of the artist, see the article "Porquê 'Jheronimus' Bosch?" and its infographics. The decoding of his works is presented in the book *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*.

---

2 The fallible dimension of Christ and the transition to a higher state (after the baptism in the Jordan) are actually surprisingly common subjects in the art of that period, being subtly disguised by association with other issues and episodes.

---

3 Giovanni Arnolfini was depicted in the role of a humanized (ordinary) Jesus. At the back of the room, the mirror (surrounded by scenes of the Passion) symbolizes Christ's higher destiny.

---

4 The artist was in fact establishing connections between his works.

---

5 On this specific issue see the articles "The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch", and "Bosch, the surdo canis".

---

6 In the following 17th century, Johannes Vermeer concealed specific devils with long "crowns", now symbolizing Louis XIV of France, the new menace on the Netherlands. The works of Vermeer are indeed one of the greatest expressions of artistic ingenuity, as will be detailed in another study.

Examples:

---

7 These two devilish characters have a symmetrical correspondence with two monstrous faces disguised in the members of the commonly designated "tree-man", on the other lateral panel.

© - Available for consultation

The Delights of Coudenberg

Paulo Martins Oliveira

In the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, Jheronimus Bosch actually addressed different issues, which were carefully encoded and accurately superimposed by means of compromise solutions.

Thus, among other issues, the artist satirized the degenerate courtiers in the luxurious gardens of the Palace of Coudenberg (Brussels), that is to say the local Flemish-Dutch elites being defiled in the headquarters of the Habsburg domination.

Despite its renovations the site survived as a garden (currently the Parc de Bruxelles/Warandepark).

The historical and artistic context is presented elsewhere[1]; the following comparative examples illustrate the Palace of Coudenberg and its joyful surroundings, i.e. the elusive *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

Jheronimus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights – central panel (1504)
Allegorical depiction of the gardens of Coudenberg

1 For more on this issue see the available papers "Bosch, the surdo canis", "Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden", "The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch", as well as the book *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*.

Lucas van Valkenborch
Landscape in Spring (1587)
Allegorical depiction of the gardens of Coudenberg

Other examples

The *Garden* also alludes to the Palace itself (example)

The following Palaces of Buen Retiro (Madrid) and Versailles

2013

© - Available for consultation

The Dutch Company

Paulo Martins Oliveira

One of the greatest masterpieces of the 17th century is undoubtedly Rembrandt's *The Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch*, usually titled as *The Night Watch*.

Following and expanding the logic of earlier masters, Rembrandt designed that work with different layers of meaning[1], ultimately celebrating the long struggle for independence of all Dutch: Protestants and Catholics, soldiers and volunteers, the old and the young...

Thus, looking beyond the superficial layer (which depicts the Company), Rembrandt used those same characters in order to also summarize and illustrate the Dutch unity and endeavor against the Spaniards. For this purpose the artist introduced symmetrical correspondences, overlaps and compromise solutions.

As presented elsewhere[2], the two central characters represent the cooperation between Dutch Protestants and Dutch Catholics (under the guidance of the firsts).

Immediately on the left there is a well trained soldier who, like a William Tell, shows his shooting accuracy by cutting the this strip of a spear[3].

On the opposite side of this marksman, the corresponding symmetrical soldier plays the role of an inexperienced volunteer, seeming uneasy with his weapon.

Therefore, this superimposed layer of meaning symbolizes the goodwill and voluntarism of all Dutch in defending their homeland, regardless their greater or lesser military experience.

The next symmetrical link reinforces this concept, since on the left (from the viewer's perspective) there is a bright woman (Saskia), representing the motherland and its coveted wealth.

In deliberate contrast, the frightened and distressed dog in the shade alludes to the Habsburg rulers (since Jheronimus Bosch, dogs represent the Habsburgs in the Netherlands).

As for the soldier on the left, he has just refilled his multiple cartridges (with the assistance of a small helper), and now prepares his musket, responding to the call of arms made by the drummer, on the opposite side.

Regarding the soldiers in the background, they also play an important symbolic role.

Thus, representing directly the Company (first layer), the large flag was strategically painted with three enhanced bands (second layer), suggestive of the Dutch national flag, already with three horizontal bands.

That proud symbol is complemented by the long spears, which evoke the former 17 provinces ruled by the Habsburgs in the 16th century, when some of those rebelled and formed an independent union (the Netherlands)[4].

The crossing of spears underlines the idea of oath and complicity, resembling the *Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis*, with which Rembrandt recalled the ancient Batavian (≈ Dutch) leaders who revolted against the Roman Empire, here equated to Spain.

However, in *The Night Watch*, the ingenuity of the painter is again expressed in an even deeper layer, now subtly illustrating the enemy, as well as the Dutch determination and ability, much greater than that of the Spaniards.

Thus, from the centre to the left[5], there is the taller Protestant commander (the Dutch leadership), followed by the competent marksman and the "woman" (the prosperous motherland), while the loading of the weapon enhances the effective resolution of the Dutch.

In contrast, in this specific layer of meaning, the smaller lieutenant on the other half represents here not the patriotic Dutch Catholics, but rather the enemy Spanish Catholic leadership, followed by an unable soldier.

In this regard, artists often introduced sagacious signs indicating the double reading of their works, as can be seen in the exercise of contrasting hands[6].

The subtle pejorative connotation of this "Spanish" half is underlined by the nervous dog[7], as well as by the drummer and his mere sounds (as blank shots), in contrast to the other half[8].

The drummer is thus accompanied by the worthless dog, whereas the real soldier on the other half is assisted by a minor but helpful volunteer.

Also the men behind follow the same logic. On one side, the flag of the Company alludes to the flag of the Nation, as said above. However, the long spears on the other side are actually a characteristic symbol of the Spaniards, expressing their power (by number, rather than by resilience or competence).

Comparative example
Pieter Bruegel
The massacre of the innocent
Symbolic depiction of the feared Duke of Alba and his Spanish soldiers.

The subtle ingenuity of Rembrandt is for instance comparable to Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, in which there is also a discreet symbolic splitting of the composition[9].

Michelangelo Buonarroti
The Last Judgment

Moreover, Rembrandt's masterpiece can also be compared to the *Surrender of Breda*, painted by Diego Velázquez just a few years before, supposedly in commemoration of a Spanish victorious episode in the Netherlands, during the war[10].

Diego Velázquez
The Surrender of Breda

In fact, made of ambiguities and compromise solutions, such paintings are much more complex and elaborate than one might assume, since they combine different issues into single images, whose layers of meaning can be individually unpacked.

There were some masters of this symbolic engineering, and one of the greatest was Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch.

2013

NOTES

1 A brief illustrative example of this concept is presented in the article "Reviewing Konrad Witz – an ingenious artist of the 15th century".

---

2 See the article "Rembrandt and the art of compromise".

---

3 In this layer of meaning, the character in front of the marksman is actually helping him (by using his wrist as a musket rest – an accessory commonly used to improve the accuracy of the shot).
Moreover, this central character standing behind marks the visual splitting of the composition.

Comparable example
Michelangelo Buonarroti
Sistine Chapel – central medallion
(see note 8 of the article "The Sistine Chapel and the new Jeremiah")

---

4 A few decades later, also Johannes Vermeer would develop symbolic references regarding the seventeen original provinces (as well as to the modern independent seven).

---

5 From the viewer's perspective; from the depicted characters themselves, the orientation is obviously reversed.

---

6 In turn, the projected shadow of the hand on the "Catholic" individual has a sarcastic intent, as opposed to the glove of the main leader, which replicates a characteristic gesture by Christ (here blessing the Protestants).

7 Besides symbolizing the Habsburgs, the dog represents the Holy See and its Inquisition.

Jheronimus Bosch
Crowning with thorns (det.)
Symbolic portrait of Emperor Frederick III
with a dog collar, having in his "crown" an oak twig
(alluding to the Rovere Popes).
Layer 1: The Holy Inquisition torturing Christianity itself
Layer 2: The Habsburgs torturing Charles the Bold and its Duchy

Furthermore, the Inquisition is largely associated with the Dominican Order, whose members were known as "domini canis", i.e. the dogs of the "lord" (the pope).

Examples from the 17th century

Anthony van Dyck
Crowning with thorns
The black and white dog alludes
to the repressive Domincan Order.

Gerrit van Honthorst
Christ before Caiaphas
The high priest Caiaphas plays
the role of a modern inquisitor,
wearing the traditional papal camauro.

Unlike Bosch, neither Van Dyck nor Van Honthorst (nor Rembrandt) worked directly under the inquisitorial repression, but nevertheless they continued to design multilayered paintings, demonstrating this way their ingenuity (by following the same subversive grammar of fellow southern colleagues, such as Caravaggio, Crespi, Velázquez, etc.).

8 In addition to the soldier preparing his gun, also the shooting by the marksman is part of the same logic, as well as the two men behind the drummer, who somehow allude to the Spaniards. One of them wears an iron helmet, which contrasts with the (Dutch) golden helmet at the other extreme of the painting (compare with the painting titled *Man in a golden helmet*). As for the other "Spaniard", he even has a provocative suggestion of peacock feathers in his hat, constituting an alternative target for the marksman. Moreover, the round shape (such as of the drum) was a symbol of the unwanted union with Spain, already used by artists like Pieter Bruegel.

9 See the chapter titled "The divided ring", in *Leonardo x Michelangelo.*

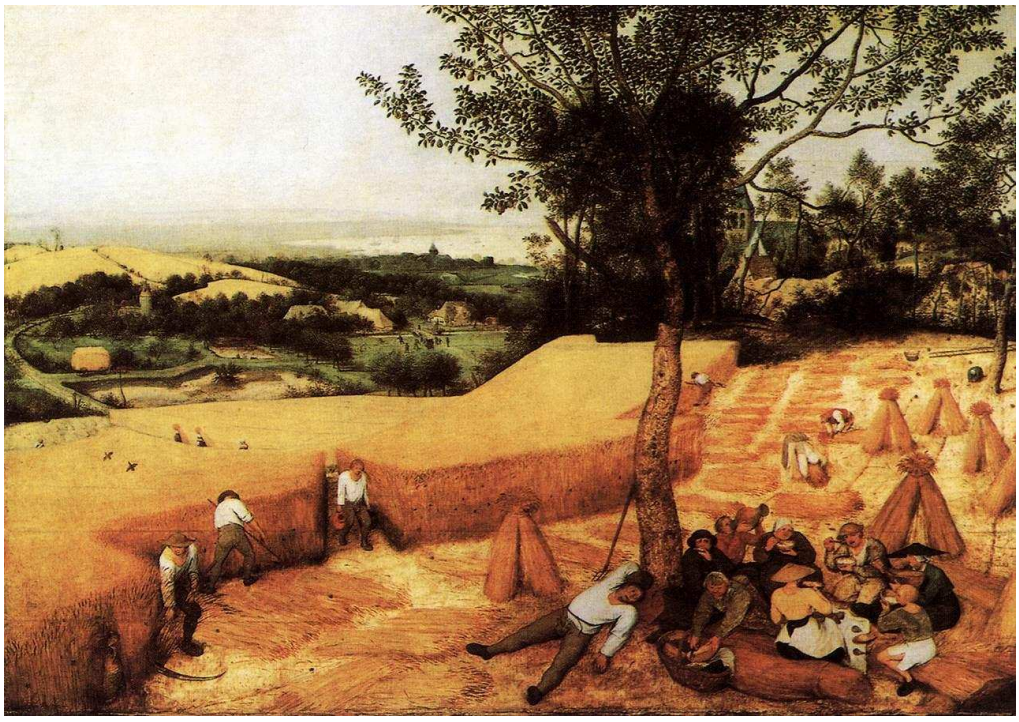
10 Velázquez was actually an admirer of the Dutch cause, encrypting in his paintings ingenious criticisms regarding Spanish policy. The *Surrender of Breda* does not even celebrates exactly the Spanish capture of that city, but rather the remarkable courtesy of Ambrosio Spinola, which contrasts with the fiery ambition of the omnipresent Count-Duke of Olivares (symbolized by the restless horse, in a role similar to that of the dog, in Rembrandt's picture).

THE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF PIETER BRUEGEL

Paulo Martins Oliveira

Abstract: witnessing the oppression imposed by the foreign imperial domination, Pieter Bruegel the Elder systematically used his art to denounce the current situation in the formerly prosperous and leading Burgundian Netherlands. With this purpose he deepened the ingenious metaphors of Jheronimus Bosch, who earlier started to diabolize the new Habsburg rulers.

He who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son,
but he who sleeps during harvest e a disgraceful son.
Proverbs of Salomon 10:5



Pieter Brugel the Elder

The Harvesters

Along with traditional Flemish proverbs[1], Pieter Bruegel also adapted biblical references with two fundamental objectives: emphasize the good values of hard work; and criticize the idle local elites, who were being corrupted by the foreign Habsburg domination.

[1] See the elaborate painting called *Netherlandisch Proverbs* – Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

This last aspect is symbolized by the particular group of "harvesters" under the tree (of sin), which in turn represents the Holy Empire, having at the top two darker round shapes that discreetly suggest sarcastic eyes[2].

Pieter Bruegel re-invented this kind of device in different paintings, being inspired by the works of his late countryman Jheronimus Bosch.

Comparative example, by Bosch

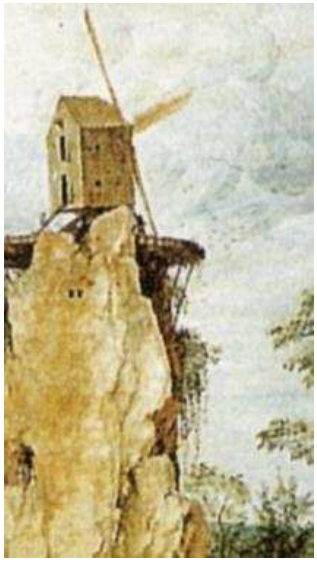
The Garden of Earthly Delights, i.e. the corrupted elites defiling the once heavenly Burgundian Netherlands (followed by the inevitable punishment).

Detail: The rock head of Emperor Maximilian Habsburg facing left, crowned with the tree of sin.

[2] This was an old device used by artists, and Leonardo even subtly refers to it in his *Treatise on Painting*, when suggesting ways for improving ingenuity (e.g. identifying devilish forms in ordinary objects). For more on this issue see *The Devils of Art*, or the examples in *Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden* (online).

Comparative examples, by Pieter Bruegel himself

The Procession to Calvary, i.e. the calvary of ordinary Flemish people, presided by Emperor Maximilian (*in memoriam*).



Detail: The mountain head of Maximilian facing right, crowned with a local windmill.

The return of the herd, i.e. the Flemish people being driven by imperial officers (the "herdsmen" led by the infamous Duke of Alba), before the dark giant figure of Emperor Charles V.

Detail: The mountain head of Charles V, with his voracious open mouth and his distinctive lower jaw (the visible lower "teeth" represent the Habsburg's headquarters in Flanders, i.e. the Palace of Coudenberg, whose famous luxuriant gardens Bosch allegorized in his mentioned triptych, in which dominates the foreign imperial orb surrounded by the local four capitals: Brussels, 's-Hertogenbosch, Leuven, Antwerp)[3].

In conclusion, the nationalist issue and the repression imposed by the imperials are crucial aspects, which Bruegel skilfully overlapped in his artworks.

2014

[3] See *The Delights of Coudenberg*; *Bosch - the Surdo Canis*; and *The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch* (all online); and *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos* (book). Despite its renovations, the garden still exists as the Parc de Bruxelles/Warandepark.

© available for consultation

Rembrandt and the commissioners

Paulo Martins Oliveira

The famous painting usually called the *Night Watch* is based on subtexts and symmetric connections, as argued elsewhere[1].
Thus, by opposing specific elements and by superimposing different issues, Rembrandt van Rijn ultimately emphasised the effort and union of all Dutch against Habsburg Spain.
Such elaborate concept survived intact even when the work was later partially cut off, especially on its left side (obliterating two individuals, and also a nearby small sarcastic face).

Early copy of the complete original (London)

The original as seen today (Amsterdam)

As displayed above, that removed section is known by a copy that shows the complete painting, from which is is possible to see how Rembrandt originally included and enhanced two men on the left, who however did not participate directly in the depicted event.
Therefore, the later removal of that section affected a complementary device, but not the symbolic engineering of the main composition, as seen today in Amsterdam.
Moreover, considering the logic followed by Rembrandt and other fellow artists, the eliminated individuals on the left are actually depictions of the commissioners, namely Captain Frans Banning Cocq and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch.

They act as spectators of allegorical versions of themselves leading the Company, which in turn celebrates the glorious war of independence that united Dutch Protestants and Catholics against a powerful common enemy.

1 See papers titled “The Dutch Company” and “Rembrandt and the art of compromise”.

Such symbolic artifices were then relatively common, by which artists introduced subtle adapted duplications, pursuing the specific goals of each painting.
This method was being explored at least since the 15th century, and in addition to the shrewd doubling of artists themselves, the same resource was also adapted to include commissioners and other individuals in elegant allegorical narratives.
During the transition from the 16th to the 17th century, Caravaggio was one of the main developers of this device, which continued to be improved throughout the following decades by artists such as Rembrandt and even Johannes Vermeer, who, for instance, created an adapted duplication of a symbolic self-portrait, in order to accurately encode personal and political messages, both traceable.

Caravaggio: *The Fortune Teller* and *Narcissus*

Vermeer: *The Procuress*

This kind of artifice was just one of several used by artists to design the most clever artworks, sometimes competing among themselves as if they were watchmakers.
There were different ways by which artists discreetly indicated the use of such expedients, including the addition of a sarcastic and provocative face, which explains perfectly why Rembrandt had originally associated a third character with the two men on the left.
In conclusion, the deciphering of the so-called *The Night Watch* must be complemented with those obliterated individuals, reinforcing even more Rembrandt's artistic and intellectual skills.

The Night Watch - Copy of London (detail of the obliterated individuals)

2014, Jan.

THE DISTRACTED WORKING DUTCH

Paulo Martins Oliveira

Abstract: Integrating himself in a long and distinguished tradition, Vermeer created numerous devices to encode political matters, especially about the new impending menaces to his young country, as seen for instance in *The Lacemaker*.

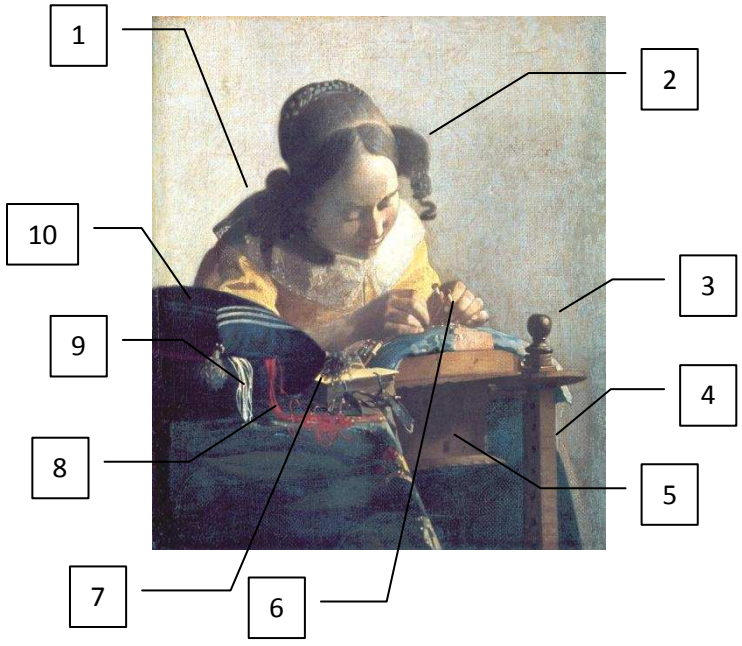
The political issue was key to the old Flemish and Dutch masters, who consolidated a tradition of overlapping such an issue in their artworks.

Thus, for instance, Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden praised the heavenly Burgundian Netherlands (e.g. *The Ghent Altarpiece*); Jheronimus Bosch denounced the corruption of this paradise by the imperial Habsburgs (e.g. *The Garden of Earthly Delights*); Pieter Bruegel called for an uprising (e.g. *Dulle Griet*); Rembrandt celebrated the glorious war of independence (e.g. *The Night Watch*), and Vermeer warned about the oncoming enemies of the new Dutch Republic.

Following a broader analysis by the same author, this paper particularizes and focuses on the painting called *The Lacemaker*.

Herein the Dutch girl represents the working but incautious Netherlands, being sneakily menaced by a disguised "lizard" and a "serpent" (1) (2), which represent the enemies (especially Louis XIV of France).

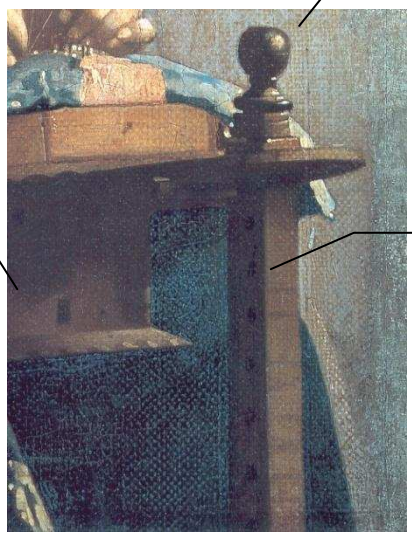
The painting contains other typical symbolic devices concerning the same matter, as follows:



1: the lizard (enemy)

2: the serpent (the tempting enemy)

3: tribute to William of Orange (Father of the Fatherland), buried in Delft

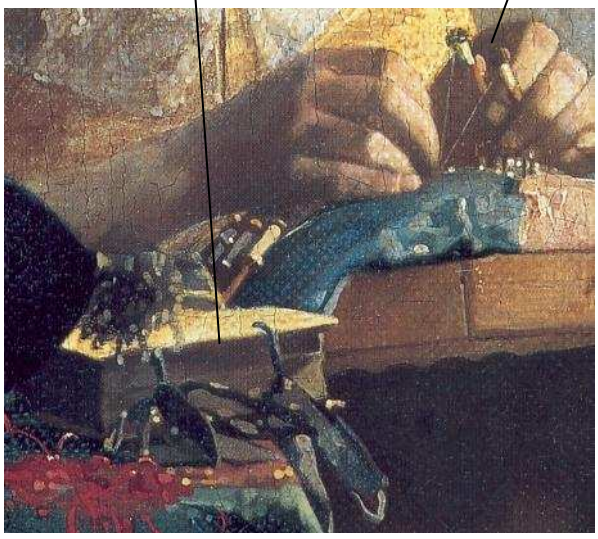


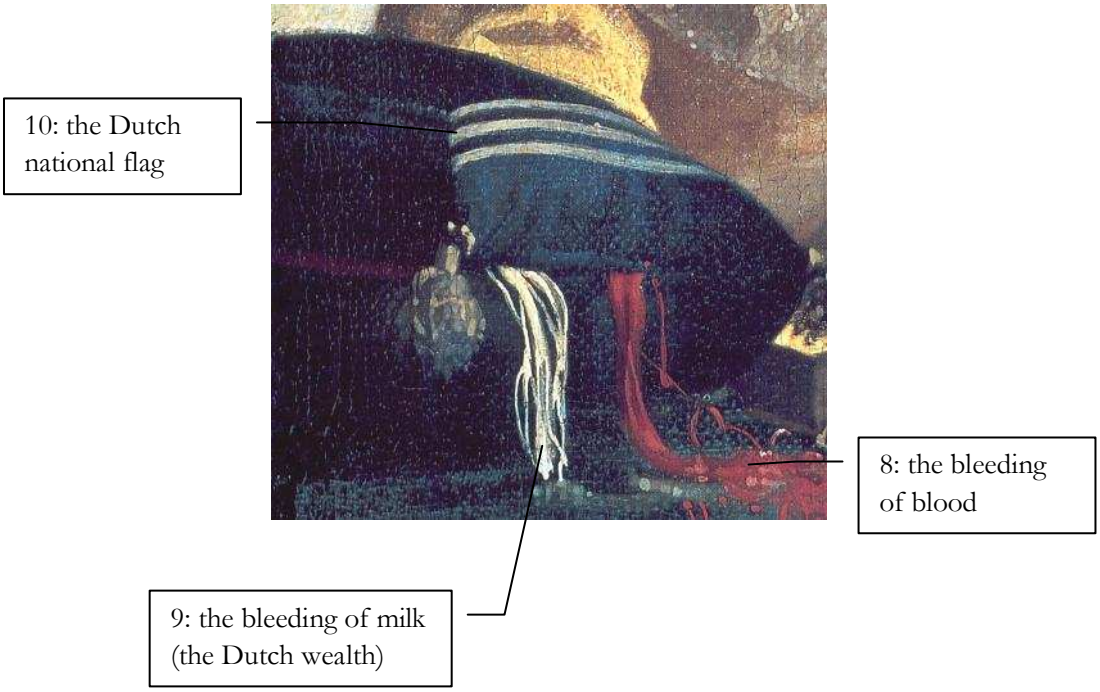
5: the waiting enemy

4: the seven United Provinces

6: the Dutch Protestants and Catholics

7: the expected besiegers





Comparative example (the Dutch Protestants and Catholics working together)

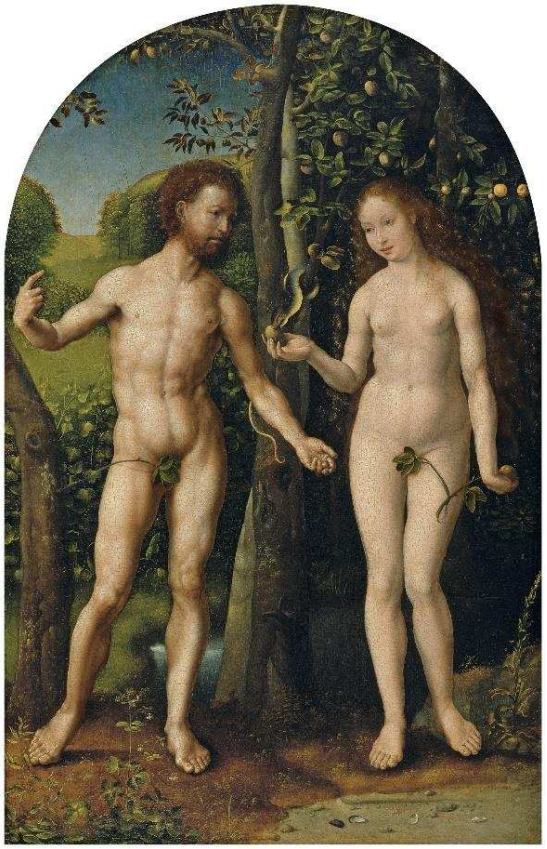
≈

2014

O PECADO DE MABUSE

PAULO MARTINS OLIVEIRA

Constituindo um bom exemplo da arte feita de ambiguidades e soluções de compromisso[1], o quadro *Adão e Eva* foi executado por Mabuse (nome artístico de Jan Gossaert), activo nas primeiras décadas do século XVI.



Hoje pertença do Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (Madrid), esta obra encerra vários engenhos simbólicos, a seguir identificados e elencados de modo sistemático.

1. A árvore da tentação é ilusoriamente constituída por duas sobrepostas, sugerindo-se até um entrelaçamento.

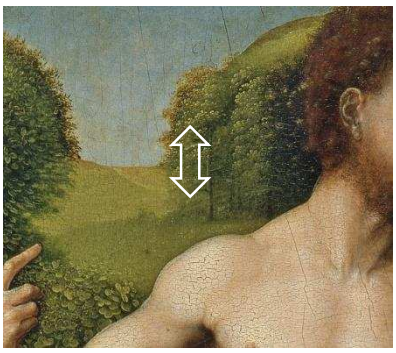
2. Assim, os frutos da árvore do pecado (Gen.3:2-3) são também os da Árvore da Vida, que simboliza a eternidade paradisíaca (Ap.22:19).

3. Desta forma, para além do pecado original (alfa, Antigo Testamento), o artista introduziu a redenção culminante (ómega, Novo Testamento).

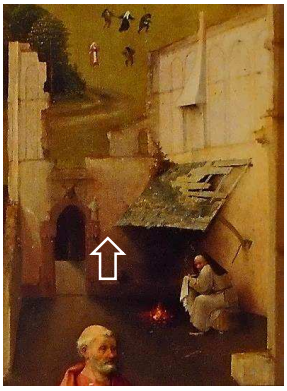
4. A relação e mesmo a sobreposição simbólica das duas árvores bíblicas conhece outros exemplos na arte da época, incluindo em Portugal[2].

5. No quadro de Mabuse, também o acesso que se observa à esquerda deve ser interpretado de modo sobreposto e dinâmico, representando a saída/expulsão do Paraíso, mas também a possibilidade de regresso às boas graças de Deus (Jo.10:9).

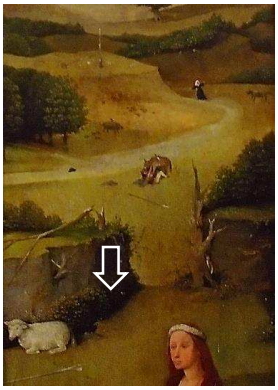
6. Assim, nesta tábua, Mabuse optou por fundir a saída com a reentrada, ao passo que o contemporâneo Bosch separou essas duas vertentes no tríptico da *Adoração dos Magos* (Prado), dando aqui um valor autónomo a cada volante[3].



Mabuse: saída/reentrada



Bosch: saída



reentrada

7. Do mesmo modo, a serpente pintada por Mabuse simboliza o pecado e a expulsão do Paraíso, mas também a regeneração medicinal (e.g. caduceu), uma vez que esse animal substitui completamente a sua pele.

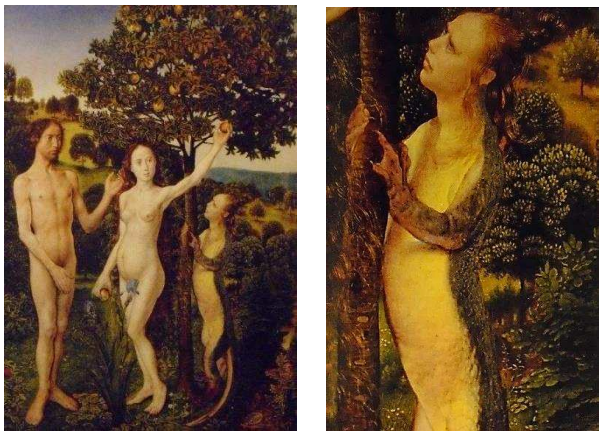
8. A árvore compósita simboliza a queda em pecado, mas igualmente um "caduceu" regenerador e redentor, novamente unindo os dois Testamentos numa lógica comum.

9. A cauda da serpente cria a sugestão de sangue a jorrar do braço de Adão (ferida ≈ pecado mortal).

10. Contudo, a mesma serpente (agora medicinal) irá curar Adão, simbolizando o perdão de Deus.

11. Na arte da época, a serpente apenas do pecado é frequentemente representada com braços, os quais Deus faria perder em sinal de castigo (Gen.3:14). Não é este o caso da serpente de Mabuse, por ter dupla interpretação (pecado e cura).

Exemplo de serpente apenas do pecado, por Hugo van der Goes



12. No quadro de Mabuse, atrás dos pés de Adão observa-se facilmente a Fonte das Águas Vivas (mais escurecida atrás de Eva). Esta fonte irá no fim dos tempos revitalizar inclusivamente o Mar Morto (Is.41:18; Eze.47:8; Ap.21:6).

13. Por seu turno, o Mar Morto é simbolizado pela praia seca à frente dos pés de Eva (em nova associação entre o castigo e a promessa de redenção).

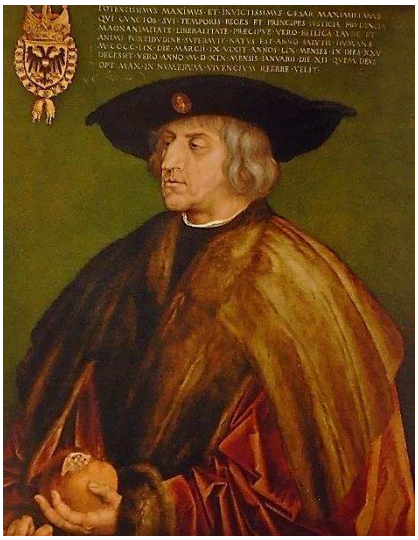
14. Através do respectivo livre-arbítrio, o próprio observador pode escolher entre o caminho mais fácil para a morte espiritual (praia seca, Mar Morto), ou o mais distante, mas compensador (Fonte das Águas Vivas).

15. Passando a outra camada interpretativa, nomeadamente de cariz político, note-se que Mabuse era crítico da administração imperial, apesar do próprio pintor trabalhar para os Habsburgos. O mesmo dilema era sentido por outros artistas, a começar pelo omnipresente Bosch.

16. A árvore carregada de frutos (tal como a romã repleta de sementes, etc.) era um símbolo do vasto e diversificado Sacro Império (≈ árvore do pecado, numa perspectiva sub-reptícia; ou a Árvore da Vida, numa conveniente interpretação oficial).

Exemplo comparativo (por Dürer)

Retrato de Maximiliano Habsburgo com a romã (Sacro Império) ≈ maçã do pecado já mordida



17. Na pintura de Mabuse, ao lado da cabeça de Eva destacam-se, na horizontal, dois pares de frutos que simbolizam olhos diabólicos.

18. Os "olhos" maduros são de Maximiliano, enquanto os jovens simbolizam a presença do neto e herdeiro Carlos (futuro Carlos V).

19. Este artifício enquadra-se numa vasta gramática simbólica que criticava os Habsburgos, e que foi desenvolvida sobretudo pela iniciativa de Bosch.

20. Neste contexto, a relação Maximiliano/Carlos exclui naturalmente Filipe o Belo (filho de Maximiliano e pai de Carlos), entretanto falecido em 1506.

21. Por seu turno, a figura de Adão é um retrato sugestivo do próprio Mabuse (vejam-se as representações conhecidas do pintor).

22. Trata-se de um artifício relativamente comum entre os artistas, que deste modo se assumiam como pecadores em busca de redenção.

23. No caso de Mabuse, como referido no ponto 15, os pecados passavam pela sua colaboração com os Habsburgos.

24. Também por isso, Adão/Mabuse está afirmativamente do lado oposto ao dos frutos imperiais, embora o personagem já se tenha deixado corromper (e ferir).

25. Os Habsburgos ficaram conhecidos na Flandres por uma influência corruptora. No quadro de Mabuse, a árvore do pecado alude a essa tentação, a que o próprio pintor não resistira.

26. Por seu turno, e agora num âmbito mais pessoal, a necessidade de redenção de Mabuse advinha também da sua conhecida vida desregrada. O mesmo aconteceria com o mais genial e infame de todos os pintores – Caravaggio – que igualmente se fez integrar em elaboradas composições desse cariz.

27. Quando tinham família, os artistas incluíam-na frequentemente nas suas composições redentoras.

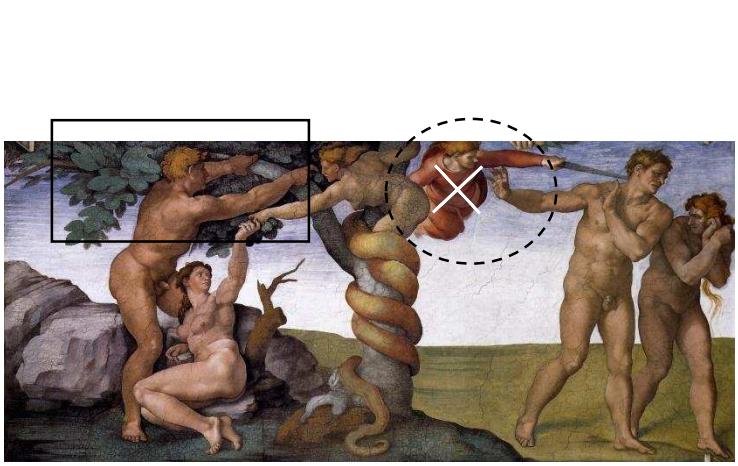
28. Neste enquadramento, a figura de Eva poderá simbolizar a esposa do pintor, Marguerita de Molenaer[4].

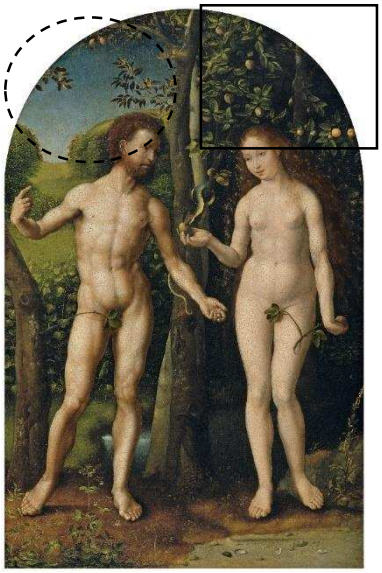
29. Já quanto à composição geral das obras artísticas, era usual os pintores se inspirarem em criações de colegas, reformulando detalhes em novas obras cada vez mais complexas e desafiantes.

30. Como é bem conhecido, Mabuse colheu óbvia inspiração numa gravura de Albrecht Dürer, desenvolvendo-a todavia num sentido próprio.

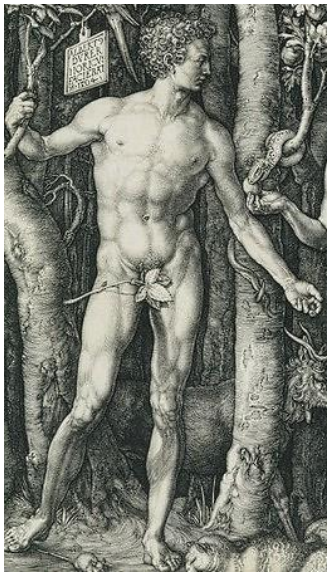
31. Por seu turno, note-se ainda que Mabuse estivera em Roma, quando Michelangelo pintava o tecto da Capela Sistina. É plausível que os dois tenham travado conhecimento, atendendo o modo expressivamente bipartido como figuraram as respectivas árvores do pecado.

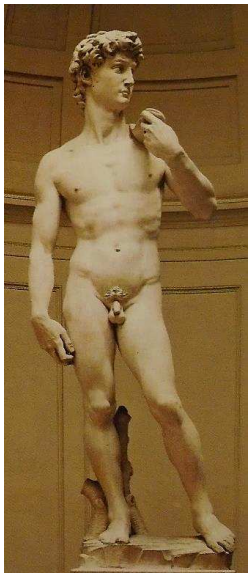
32. De facto, as árvores dos dois artistas mostram-se frondosas no lado do Éden e vazias no lado da expulsão (Michelangelo preencheu o vazio com o anjo, mas o princípio é similar).





33. Por sua vez, parece existir uma relação entre a acima referida gravura de Dürer e o *David* de Michelangelo, interligando todos estes artistas numa lógica de contínua reinvenção.





Em suma, o quadro de Mabuse aqui em análise consiste numa intrincada e harmoniosa sobreposição que, através de ambiguidades, dá duplos significados aos mesmos elementos visuais.

O artista materializou assim uma composição dinâmica, onde o casal primogénito (a Humanidade) comete o pecado original, o que lhe custará a saída do Paraíso. Ficou no entanto a via aberta para o reingresso nas boas graças de Deus.

Do mesmo modo, essa esperança na redenção era vista a um nível estritamente individual, tal como era também pessoal o desejo de que os territórios neerlandeses viessem a recuperar o seu lugar de prestígio junto das nações independentes da Europa.

Mabuse revela-se portanto um artista que sabia articular diferentes matérias em simultâneo, e nisto a sua árvore sobreposta constitui um bom símbolo do próprio conceito.

Disponibilizado para consulta
Dezembro de 2015

NOTAS

[1] Sobre este conceito, vejam-se os contributos *Leonardo's Last Supper and the three layers*; *Rembrandt and the art of compromise*; ou *The composite episodes in Christian Art*, para além dos estudos associados.

[2] Na parede esculpida do Convento de Cristo (Tomar), as duas grandes árvores dos extremos simbolizam, respectivamente, a árvore do pecado e a da Vida, as quais por sua vez se encontram sobrepostas na árvore central (morta e viva). Esta replicação e combinação do elemento arbóreo tem por base a estrutura que se ergue ao centro da antiga rotunda templária, no interior do monumento, e que também representa uma árvore bíblica.

[3] Sobre este assunto confira-se *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, pp.52-53.

[4] Como ressalva, note-se que nem todas as Evas reportam as paixões legítimas dos antigos mestres.

O CRIPTO-BOSCH DE GUIMARÃES (I)

Paulo Martins Oliveira

Durante os séculos XV e XVI não era raro que também artistas menos conhecidos se fizessem integrar nas respectivas composições, nomeadamente através de auto-retratos simbólicos e sugestivos, por vezes mesclando-se com os seus mestres directos ou outros mentores que admiravam particularmente.

Uma grande referência assim emulada foi Jheronimus Bosch, como se observa no *Tríptico da Lamentação*, datável de inícios do século XVI e actualmente no Museu Alberto Sampaio (Guimarães).

O nome do artista é hoje desconhecido, sendo aqui designado por cripto-Bosch por via de um importante detalhe associável ao famoso pintor contemporâneo da Borgonha Neerlandesa.

Det. do *Tríptico da Lamentação* (Guimarães)

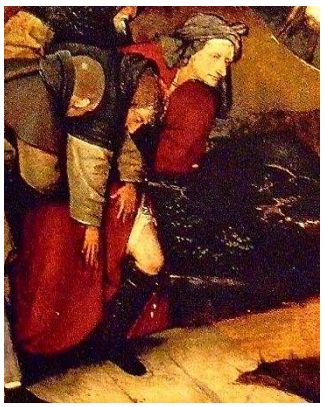
⇦

Det. do *Carregamento da Cruz*, por Bosch (Gand)

Em primeiro lugar, este aspecto integra o artista anónimo no ciclo flamengo, notando-se por exemplo um artifício análogo no MNAA, desenvolvido pelo também contemporâneo (e nórdico) Francisco Henriques.

Det. de *A Apanha do Maná* (Francisco Henriques)

⇦



Det. de *As Tentações de Santo Antão* (Bosch)

Quanto ao auto-retrato simbólico e penitente do próprio Bosch no quadro de Gand, o artista assinalou o contraste com Santa Verónica. Deste modo, Bosch assumia-se como um dos pecadores que desrespeitam Cristo, i.e. o mártir Carlos o Temerário, ou melhor dizendo o orgulho independentista neerlandês.

Seguindo códigos precisos que eram partilhados em certos círculos artísticos, esta imagem seria então adaptada pelo criador da obra de Guimarães, nomeadamente do seguinte modo:

A figura 1 representa o anónimo cripto-Bosch mesclado com a sua grande referência artística, Jheronimus Bosch; a figura 2 é uma caricatura do artista anónimo, agora autonomizado (estes desdobramentos e versões especificadas eram relativamente comuns à época); a figura 3 é uma variante da Verónica original de Bosch, e encontra-se aqui, por um lado, a representar a dualidade do próprio pintor anónimo, e por outro lado a ser importunada pelo mesmo artista, que assim codifica (e confessa) o seu principal pecado – a luxúria (suplementarmente, poderá ainda representar a sua esposa, exercício também habitual nesse tempo, jogando-se sempre na ambiguidade expressiva).

A título comparativo, veja-se um esquema algo similar de Leonardo na *Última Ceia* de Milão, onde um ameaçador Pedro assedia João/Madalena (figura compósita que se deixa seduzir).

Leonardo está representado em Pedro, tal como Salai está em João/Madalena, que se deixa seduzir. De notar que existiam contactos entre Jheronimus Bosch e Leonardo, pelo que a referência do cripto-Bosch à obra milanesa deverá ser indirecta (via Bosch).

Mas ainda a propósito do tríptico hoje em Guimarães, existem outros aspectos que reforçam a inspiração em Bosch, caso da pequena personagem no painel esquerdo, a qual desempenha o seu papel num desenvolto programa simbólico que abrange toda a obra, como será apresentado na segunda parte desta análise.

2015

THE FORGOTTEN DISCIPLE OF ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN

Paulo Martins Oliveira

One of the most talented disciples of Rogier van der Weyden was a relatively obscure Portuguese painter called Nuno Gonçalves (ca.1415-ca.1490), who, in any case, was remembered in the following 16th century as being an artistic "eagle", along with other great but much more familiar names[1].

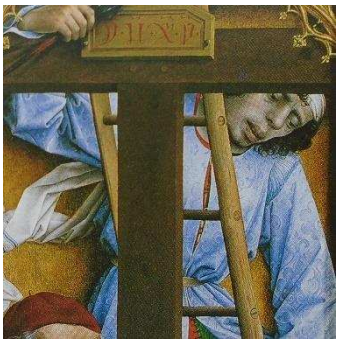
The figure of Gonçalves can actually be identified in a few pictures, since it was not unusual for painters to include themselves in artworks by means of suggestive, insinuating characters.

In fact, also the most promising and talented assistants were included in those ingenious compositions, for they were regarded as disciples and followers of their masters.

Moreover, the young Nuno Gonçalves had a particular position in the workshop of Rogier van der Weyden, in result of the crucial alliance signed in 1429 between the sovereign Duchy of Burgundy and the Kingdom of Portugal. This covenant involved the marriage of Duke Philip the Good to Princess Isabel, and from that moment on the Burgundian Netherlands become the European emporium of the Portuguese gradual overseas expansion, which had begun in 1415.

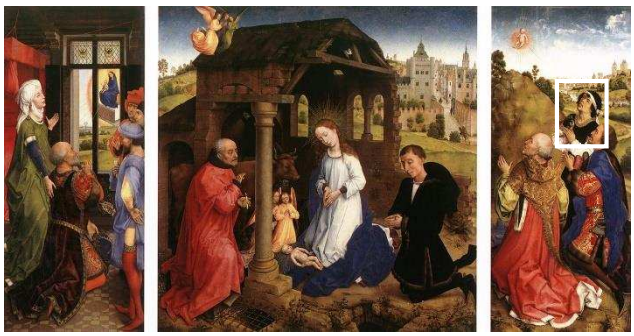
In this broad context, the initial artistic bonds between the two countries were established by Jan van Eyck, and then ensured by his fellow rising colleague Rogier van der Weyden.

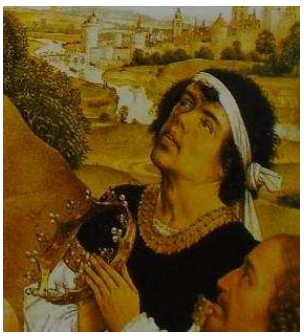
The young Portuguese assistant was thus allegorically portrayed in the *Descent from the Cross* (ca.1435, Madrid; naturally, master Rogier is also depicted herein)[2].



det.

Another suggestive figuration of Nuno Gonçalves can be found in the *Bladelin/Middelburg triptych* (ca.1445-50, Berlin).





det.

Soon after this painting Gonçalves returned to his native country to become a royal painter, and perhaps this depiction of him holding a crown anticipates and celebrates that career development.

Thus, in 1450 the distinguished former assistant assumed his new post in Portugal, where he went on to earn an unprecedented salary.

Later on in the 70's, he would conceive his greatest masterpiece: an elaborate painting for the central altar of the main temple of Lisboa (*The Polyptych of the Avis Dinasty*), in which he depicted himself realistically, returning a defiant, knowing look[3].

det.

Furthermore the paintings mentioned in this text contain other embedded details regarding the alliance between Portugal and the Duchy of Burgundy. Being the most fruitful of the European 15th century, such a covenant was culturally empowered in various ways, including the collaboration between the eminent Rogier van der Weyden and the promising Nuno Gonçalves.

2015

Final remark

Master Rogier van der Weyden

Master Nuno Gonçalves

Notes

[1] Francisco de Holanda: *Da Pintura Antiga*, 1548.

[2] This issue deserves a specific study, for there are actually various allegorical depictions of Rogier van der Weyden, either by himself, or by his direct disciples, or even by posthumous admirers (15th - 16th centuries). In fact, he was a particularly important reference to the free-thinking community, and his artworks are far more complex than its superficial layers of meaning.

[3] This last identification was originally suggested 105 years ago. See the book *O Pintor Nuno Gonçalves* (pp.61-62, 90), authored in 1910 by José de Figueiredo, who was the first Director of the Portuguese National Museum of Ancient Art (MNAA).

AS MOEDAS FÚNEBRES DE CARLOS O TEMERÁRIO

PAULO MARTINS OLIVEIRA

Localizado na Igreja de Nossa Senhora de Bruges, o túmulo de Carlos o Temerário está junto ao da filha Maria de Borgonha.

Ambas as figuras jacentes apresentam-se de olhos abertos, simbolizando a futura ressurreição, embora a estátua do Temerário denote ainda um pormenor subtil mas significativo, nomeadamente o facto das iris oculares terem sido trabalhadas para sugerirem também pequenas moedas.

Simbolicamente recuperava-se assim uma tradição da Antiguidade (o pagamento da "travessia")[1], ritual este que, agora adaptado ao tempo de Carlos, alude certamente à conveniência de um contributo suplementar para que o defunto encontre paz, depois das suas muitas tribulações e pecados, incluindo os da soberba e da ambição, o que lhe custara a vida e até a independência do estado.

De facto, trata-se de uma das mais interessantes e contraditórias figuras do século XV europeu, e cuja ambiguidade se reflecte na própria imagem tumular, a qual apresenta ainda outros elementos de interesse. É o caso do barrete sugestivo de uma coroa, e que de algum modo lembra o do primo "O Africano" nos Painéis de Nuno Gonçalves (aqui também reportando ameias, sublinhando os atributos de fortaleza do reino e de conquistador além-mar).

Acima de tudo, importa realçar as noções de ambiguidade e de metamorfose, pelas quais os artistas multiplicavam as mensagens inscritas nas suas obras.

Disponibilizado para consulta
Setembro de 2015

[1] De notar que já o pai de Carlos, o Duque Filipe o Bom, recuperara o imaginário clássico ao ver-se como um novo Jasão, rodeado dos argonautas. O conceito será importante para compreender alguns pormenores que, décadas depois, seriam lavrados no Mosteiro dos Jerónimos, sob a égide de D. Manuel (o seu pai, D. Fernando, era primo direito do Temerário, sendo que ambos até se identificavam particularmente).

THE NETHERLANDISH BIRDS

PAULO MARTINS OLIVEIRA

There are a number of reasons explaining the symbolic importance of the spoonbill to the patriotic Netherlandish freethinkers of the 16th century.

1. That bird nests on wet, low lands (≈ the Low Countries; Netherlands), thus resembling many Dutch and Flemish populations.

Example

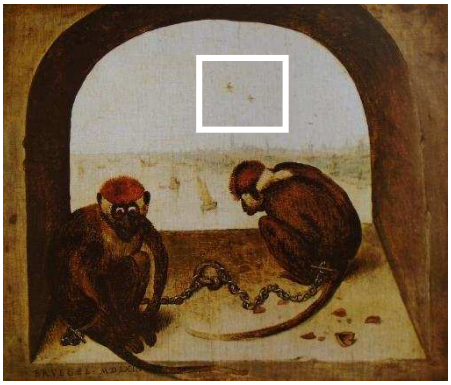
Spoonbills by Jheronimus Bosch specifically representing the Netherlandish people, along with other animals which, in turn, symbolize particular nations (and rulers)[1].

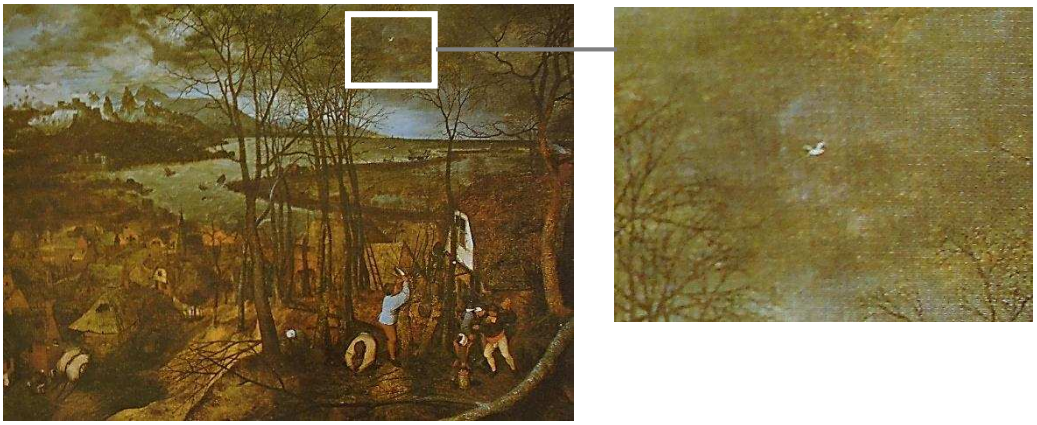
2. The spoonbill flies high, and for this reason it became a symbol of hope and freedom to the Netherlandish patriots, especially during the Habsburg ruling.

Example from Bosch

The spoonbill facing the Habsburg armoured ship in the skies[2].

Examples from Bruegel

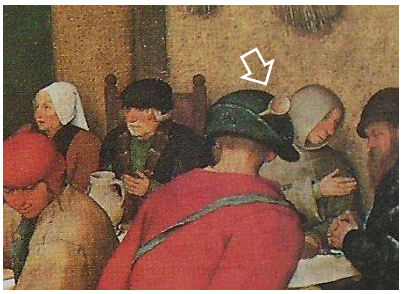




The high flight expressing hope for truly better days.

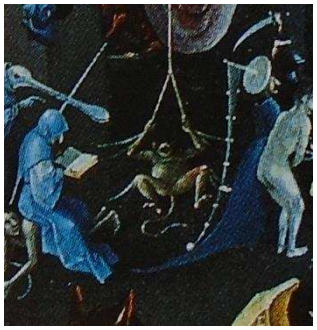
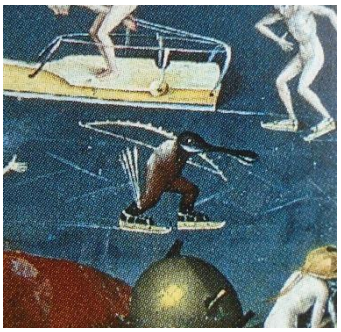
3. In the works designed by Bosch and Bruegel (and others), the depiction of a spoon (lepel) actually refers to the spoonbill (lepelaar), i.e. the surreptitious desire for freedom and independence.

Examples from Bosch and Bruegel



4. The grave sin of treason was coded either by punishing devils with a spoon, or by dark spoonbills.

Examples from Bosch

5. A synonym of the darkened spoonbill was the northern bald ibis (from the same family of the spoonbill). At that time, this ibis was relatively common in Europe.

6. Bosch used such a sinister bird to design a multi-layered character, which also symbolizes the guilty artist himself, since he was accepting well-paid commissions from the Habsburgs and their local deputies at Coudenberg (Brussels)[3].

The guilty Bosch, easily sliding to sin again

The penitent Bosch striving to correct himself

7. Other dark birds were synonymous with both the symbolic dark spoonbill and the northern bald ibis.

8. As for the real, noble spoonbill, it was also known for taking good care of the respective offspring, being therefore equivalent to the caring pelican (a symbol of Christ).

Comparative examples

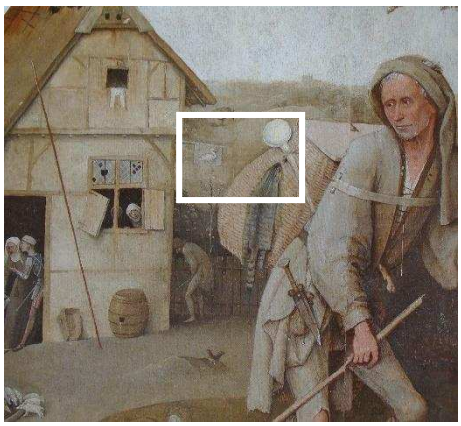
The pelican as a personal insignia of King John II of Portugal (cousin to Mary of Burgundy-Netherlands).

A pelican-eagle[4] by Jheronimus Bosch.

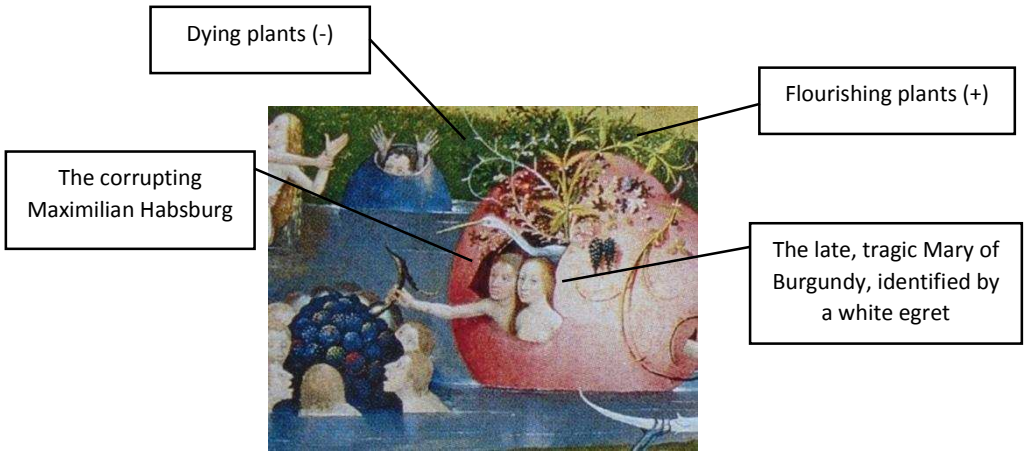
A negative (disloyal) version of the pelican, by Jheronimus Bosch.

9. Besides the pelican, other white birds were also synonymous with the spoonbill: swans, ducks, egrets, storks.

Examples from Bosch



Allegory about the once patriotic Palace of Coudenberg, now transformed into a brothel and a tavern (Bosch himself desires to escape from such a corrupting ambience).


Dying plants (-)
Flourishing plants (+)
The corrupting Maximilian Habsburg
The late, tragic Mary of Burgundy, identified by a white egret

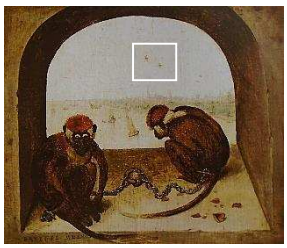
Allegory about the famous luxuriant gardens of the Palace of Coudenberg, now defiled and corrupting (i.e. *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, det.)[5].

Example from the 17th century (Jan Asselijn)

The Dutch white swan (≈ the lepelaar) defending his "nest" from a dog (since Bosch the dog represents the foreign interference in the Netherlandish territories). The water itself symbolizes the large Rhine (reason for the ship mentioned in #2).

As a final remark, it should be noted that all these devices ultimately relate to a popular saying, which Bruegel had collected and embedded in his *Netherlandish Proverbs*.

≈



"To recognize a bird by its feathers"
(overlapping with "to gaze at the stork")

Available for consultation
September 2015

Notes

[1] See *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, pp.158-159, 256-257, 285.

[2] See *The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch*.

[3] On the superimposed meanings of the skating ibis see *The (diabolic) oak of the Rovere Popes*, as well as the mentioned book *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, pp.233-238, 261-262. It is to be noted that there are other self-punishing representations of the artist (e.g. the Tree-Man; the deaf dog (see *Bosch, the surdo canis*).

[4] Actually, the merging of animals was common at that time. The inclusion of the eagle relates to St. John the Evangelist, who is depicted on the other side of the same wood panel, wherein the respective "eagle" is now also a hawk (this elaborate device is aimed sarcastically at Engelbert II of Nassau).

[5] See *The Delights of Coudenberg*; *Bosch, the surdo canis*; and *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, p.225.

THE DEAF BOSCH AND THE BLIND BRUEGEL

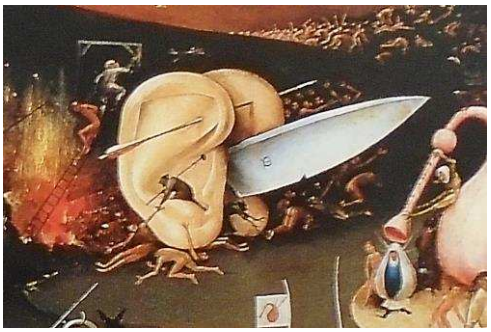
PAULO MARTINS OLIVEIRA

"Listen you deaf people, and look up, you blind people, so you may see"

Isaiah 42:18

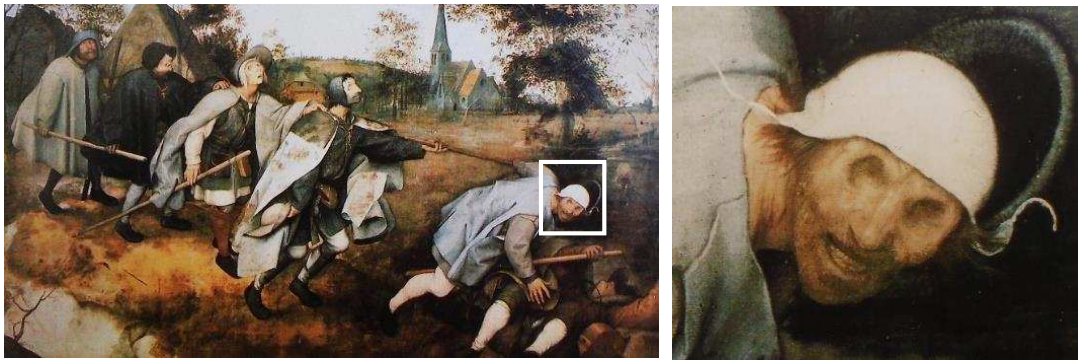
Despite being two genuine patriots, Jheronimus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel shared a sin: like several other Netherlandish, both of them had profited from the Habsburg administration, especially from Engelbert II of Nassau and Cardinal Granvelle, respectively.

Firstly, being inspired by biblical references and mainly by the "surdo canis" (collected by Erasmus), Bosch coded himself as a deaf, i.e. someone unable to hear the voice of decency and reason. This was allegorized by means of different symbolic devices, as shown elsewhere[1].



The issue of "deafness" according to Bosch
(example from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*)

Later in the 16th century, Pieter Bruegel would reinvent those devices in order to consider himself as a "blind" soul[2].

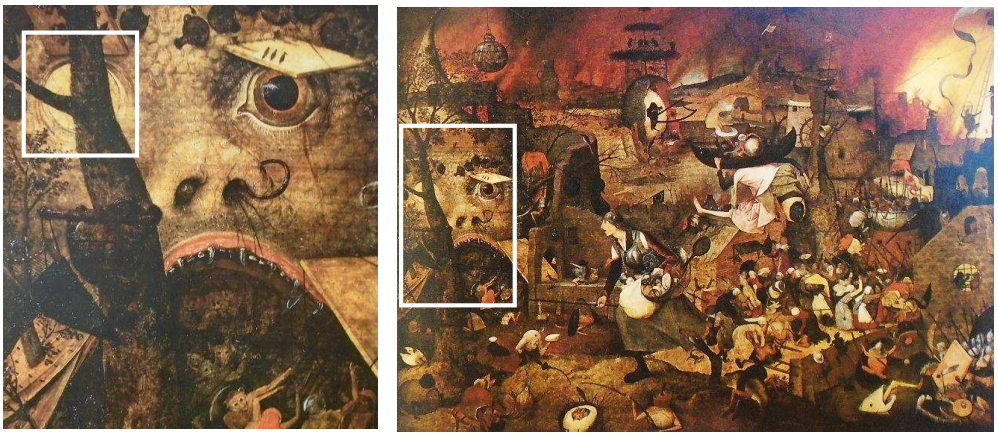


Parable of the Blind (symbolic self-portrait of Pieter Bruegel)[3].

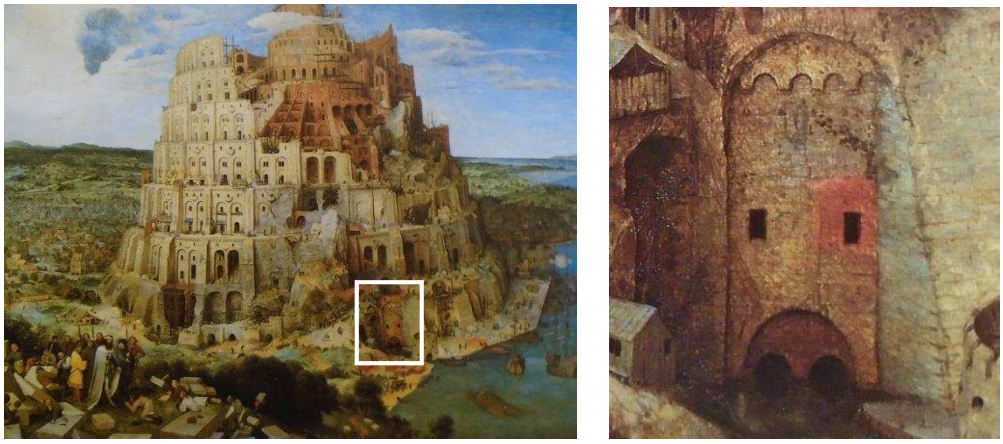
Bruegel's concept of blindness (total or partial) was also applicable to all the Netherlandish who were accepting the Habsburg administration, and even profiting from it.

Examples

Gluttony (det.), i.e. greed, corruption; the Netherlandish situation[4].



Dulle Griet. The (partially hidden) glass eye symbolizes the national treason perpetrated by the local deputies of the Habsburgs (≈ Coudenberg).



The Tower of Babel. Embedded in the great tower (the Habsburg domination), this typical anthropomorphic building[5] is actually eyesight affected, which again symbolizes the controversial delegate government of the once leading and proud Burgundian Netherlands[6].

As a final remark, it should be noted that all these devices are part of a much broader symbolic grammar, by which the heterogeneous Netherlandish people were equated to the also beloved and irresponsible tribes of Israel, who so often were deaf and blind to their own interests[7].

In this redeeming allegorical process, Bosch and Bruegel became fundamental references for the next generation of Netherlandish artists, when new threats arose[8].

Available for consultation
October 2015

NOTES

[1] See several other examples in *Bosch, the surdo canis*; check also *Jheronimus Bosch, o relojoeiro dos símbolos*.

[2] Besides the opening biblical quotation, (Isa.42:18), see other references from the same Isaiah (6:10, 29:18, 35:5, 42:19, 43:8).

[3] Other symbolic, suggestive portraits of Bruegel are presented in page 10 of the mentioned paper *Bosch, the surdo canis*. On the general issue, see also *The political consciousness of Pieter Bruegel*; *The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch*; *As faces de Engelbert*; *The Delights of Coudenberg*; *Porquê 'Jheronimus' Bosch?*; *The (diabolic) oak of the Rovere Popes*; *Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden*; *The Netherlandish Birds*; besides *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*.

[4] See also the blind character in the engraving titled *The Temptation of St. Anthony*. Focusing specifically on the windmill, it symbolized the Netherlandish, whereas the watermill was a coded reference to the Holy Empire (e.g. page 8 of *The Nationalist and Rational Jheronimus Bosch*). Note that the watermill blades were creatively adapted by Bosch to design a variety of devilish, punishing symbols (see *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, pp.270-272).

[5] On this matter see *A Terrível Torre de Belém*.

[6] This was actually a very sensitive and dividing subject. Many Netherlandish desired a strong state, as sought by Philip the Good and especially by his son Charles the Bold. However, others preferred a non-centralized solution, even if it meant coming under the Habsburg ruling and its taxes. Most of the local artists preferred the first option, and nostalgically recalled the times of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden as a golden era, in which the Flemish-Dutch territories were Heaven on Earth.

[7] This was also the situation of the divided and partially occupied Italy, which explains, in part, why the ingeniously bold Jheronimus Bosch was well regarded by figures as Leonardo and Michelangelo, who despite their own rivalries were patriots aspiring to a unified, free Peninsula. This was actually the ultimate goal of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, which was largely inspired by the ruthless but determined unifier Cesare Borgia (who even hired Leonardo and hosted Machiavelli). In a sense, that controversial individual (Cesare Borgia) recalls the late Charles the Bold himself. Despite their many sins, they both would be regarded as unfortunate symbols of good causes, in Italy and in Flanders, respectively (on Charles see *As moedas fúnebres de Carlos o Temerário*).

[8] See *The distracted working Dutch*.

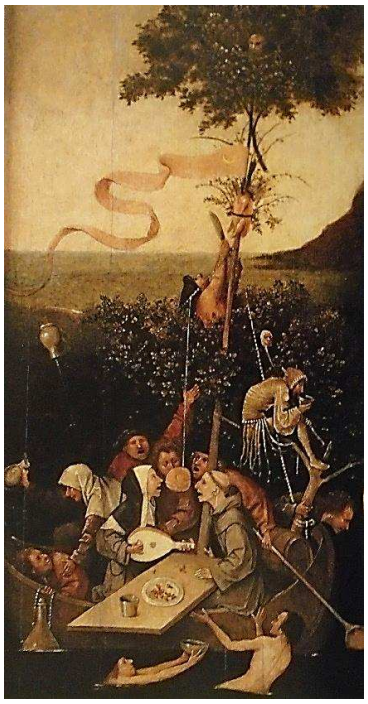
BOSCH E A BARCA DOS LUSITANOS

PAULO MARTINS OLIVEIRA

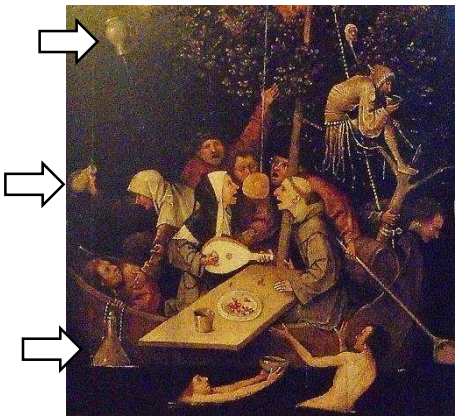
English abstract. Certain nationalist devices designed by Jheronimus Bosch were later adopted and adjusted by some other artists, in order to address similar concerns and to hide analogous accusations. This is the case of André Reinoso, who would reinvent the famous *Ship of Fools* to satirize the Habsburg administration of Portugal (1580-1640).

Tendo em vista a crítica sub-reptícia aos Habsburgos e à sua influência corruptora, Jheronimus Bosch criara diversos engenhos simbólicos, entre os quais se destaca aqui a *Nave dos Loucos* (Louvre).

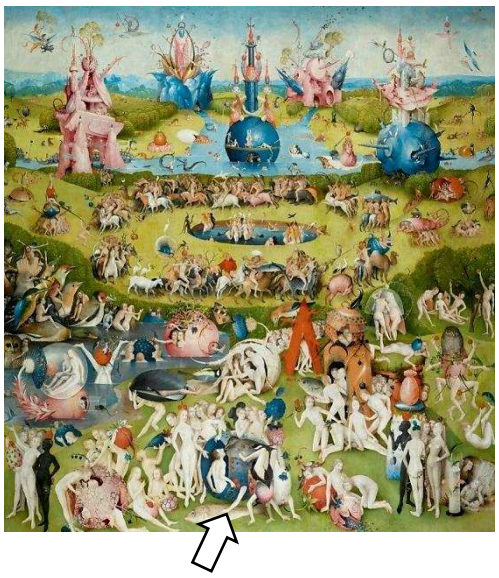
Para esta composição, Bosch inspirara-se por sua vez em escritos moralistas anteriores (e.g. Sebastian Brant), adequando-os todavia a um contexto político, nomeadamente para denunciar a irresponsabilidade de muitos dos seus compatriotas neerlandeses, (sobretudo nas elites), que se mostravam complacentes para com a governação dos Habsburgos (Sacro Império), e nisto o artista não deixou de fazer a sua auto-crítica.



Com a árvore do pecado a bordo[1], a barca dos neerlandeses navega em falsas águas, tratando-se na verdade de vinho corruptor (em toda a parte inferior do quadro, em primeiro plano). No papel de "sereias", encarregados dos Habsburgos vão abastecendo os passageiros com o líquido que lhe envenena o discernimento moral, sendo ainda de destacar a representação de vasos – um tradicional símbolo de prostituição[2] (≈corrupção, traição).



Outros exemplos, com o mesmo objectivo (*Jardim das Delícias* e *O Viajante*).



Os modelos alegóricos de Bosch seriam posteriormente reinventados por artistas como Pieter Bruegel, mas também por outros muito para além dos territórios neerlandeses, e mesmo já durante o século XVII.

[1] Note-se em todo o caso que, para Bosch, a árvore é um símbolo polissémico.

[2] Por associação à dúplice Maria Madalena, considerada uma prostituta arrependida.

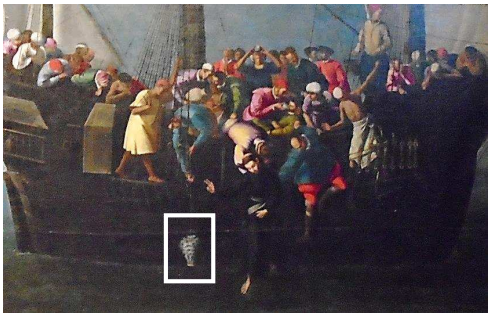
Esse é o caso de André Reinoso, que por volta de 1619-20 fez integrar uma barca da corrupção no Ciclo da Vida de S. Francisco Xavier (série de pinturas na Sacristia de S. Roque, Lisboa).

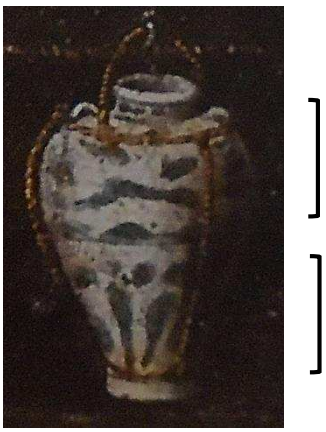
A tela em questão reporta um milagre que teria ocorrido nos mares do Índico, quando S. Francisco Xavier transformou água marinha em potável, saciando a sede dos navegantes a bordo.

Quanto à interpretação desta pintura, é possível acrescentar:

1. Ainda numa perspectiva oficial, S. Francisco Xavier surge figurado de modo cristológico: é criada a ilusão de que caminha sobre a água; o santo jesuíta é baixado por dois indivíduos que insinuam os dois ladrões crucificados; a própria transformação da água marinha em potável lembra de algum modo o milagre de Jesus nas Bodas de Caná.

2. Agora numa perspectiva sub-reptícia, o vaso que é levantado das águas apresenta uma face antropomórfica na metade superior (olhos e boca), e ainda dois traços verticais na metade inferior.





3. Trata-se de uma alegoria negativa visando o monarca Habsburgo Filipe II de Portugal (III de Espanha), que aliás faleceria pouco depois, em 1621. Ainda de notar que a abertura do vaso insinua uma coroa.

4. É possível encontrar exercícios semelhantes nas obras de Bosch (e Bruegel)[3].

> Exemplo do *Jardim das Delícias* – na rocha está modelada a cabeça de Maximiliano Habsburgo (de perfil, olhando para a esquerda), corada com a árvore do pecado.

5. Além disso, Bosch por vezes também incluía sarcasmos de cariz sexual. Tal observa-se na figura de S. Pedro da *Adoração dos Magos* (Prado)[4], e é o que se observará depois na referida representação de S. Francisco Xavier, idealizada por André Reinoso.

6. Por sua vez, note-se que as inversões do significado religioso não eram raras, sendo até comuns nas figurações de anjos (com discretos elementos diabólicos, simbolizando serem na verdade criaturas enganadoras enviadas por Lúcifer)[5].

7. Neste contexto, a água daquele vaso (Habsburgo) serve apenas para envenenar os sedentos da nau lusitana.

[3] Vejam-se alguns exemplos dos dois pintores em *The political consciousness of Pieter Bruegel*.
[4] Confira-se *The (diabolic) oak of the Rovere Popes*.
[5] Sobre este aspecto, veja-se *The Deceptive Angels*, e *Os anjos caídos dos Jerónimos*.

8. O próprio S. Francisco Xavier e a respectiva Ordem Jesuítica fazem parte deste subtil mecanismo crítico desenhado por Reinoso.

9. De origem espanhola, S. Francisco Xavier viera para Portugal nos tempos de D. João III, o qual por seu turno fez instalar a Inquisição em Portugal.

10. Utilizando S. Francisco Xavier como pretexto, André Reinoso amalgamou os Jesuítas, a Inquisição e os Habsburgos espanhóis num único grande poder que, vindo do país vizinho, agora dominava e envenenava (corrompia) Portugal.

11. O princípio fundamental é muito semelhante à "nave" de Bosch.

12. Contudo, em vez da típica festividade neerlandesa[6], no navio português prevalece um ambiente taciturno e sombrio, onde nem mesmo a água supostamente fresca constitui motivo de alento, esperança ou sequer agradecimento.

Em conclusão, André Reinoso revela-se pois um livre-pensador nacionalista, tudo indicando que tivesse aproveitado a especial e antiga ligação entre Portugal e o mundo flamengo e neerlandês para conceber a pintura aqui analisada.

Disponibilizado para consulta
Novembro de 20015

[6] Isto mesmo é referido por Erasmo de Roterdão nas primeiras páginas do seu *Elogio da Loucura*: "E como é digno de louvor o povo de Brabante. Enquanto para os outros homens a idade costuma afirmar a prudência, estes quanto mais acedem à senectude tanto mais afirmam a loucura. Não há gente como esta, para levar a vida cada vez mais festivamente, para cada vez menos sentir a tristeza do envelhecimento".

THE CHOICES OF JHERONIMUS BOSCH

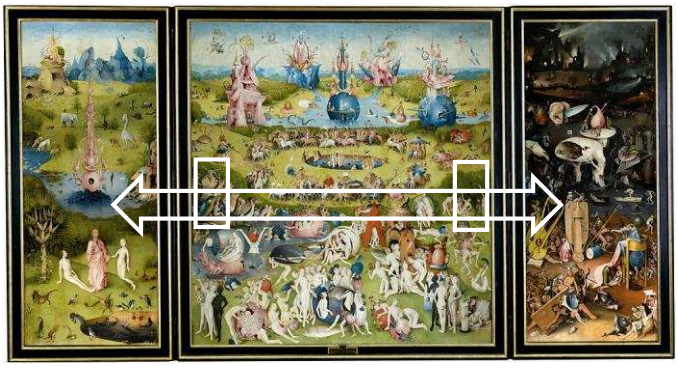
PAULO MARTINS OLIVEIRA

Jheronimus Bosch embedded symbolic choices in his artworks, by which he emphasized the individual responsibility and free will of each viewer. It should be noted that this concern was shared by other humanist artists, who also formulated ingenious devices that ultimately challenged the observer's insight and moral conscience[1].

In this context, the triptychs designed by Bosch even present figurative links between the central and the respective wings. Such links consist of specific, meaningful scenes or details, which were symmetrically placed in order to ease the transition either to one side or to the other[2].

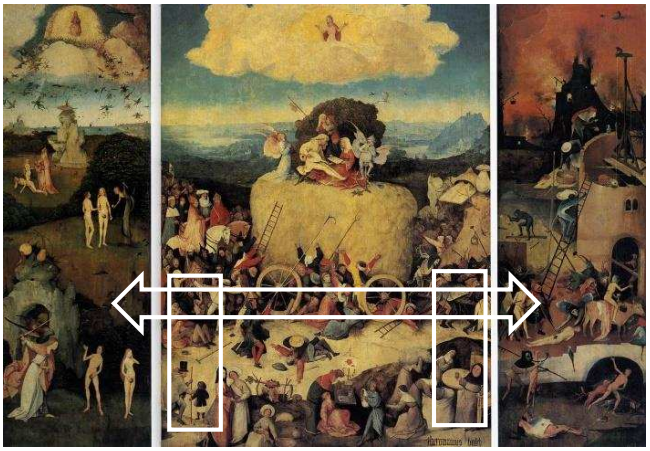
Thus, in addition to the progressive sequences left-to-right[3], these same triptychs also offer the perceptive viewer an allegorical choice between salvation and hellish punishment (i.e. to one side or to the other, from a central axis of symmetry)[4].

The Garden of Earthly Delights (Madrid)



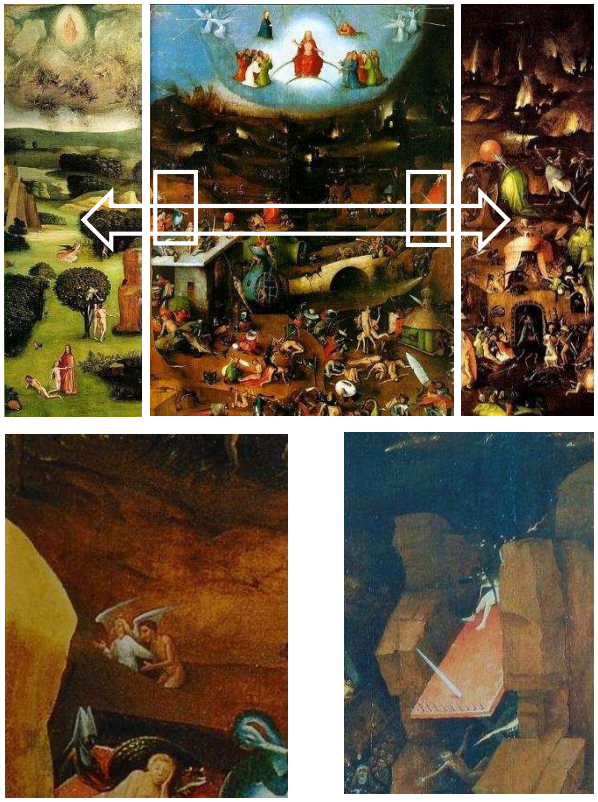
The central panel of the *Garden* represents the current state of the world (and more particularly of the now idle and corrupted Burgundian Netherlands)[5]. The observer can then choose either to listen to the specific, sober characters (and go to Heaven thereafter), or instead follow those who repeat and magnify the original sin (linking to the punishing panel). The nearby owls (on each side) reiterate the alternatives presented[6].

The Haywain (Madrid)



This central panel symbolizes the almost irresistible, intoxicating cult of wealth. At this point, the viewer is faced with examples of both compassion (linking to Heaven) and irresponsible, restraining greed (linking to Hell).

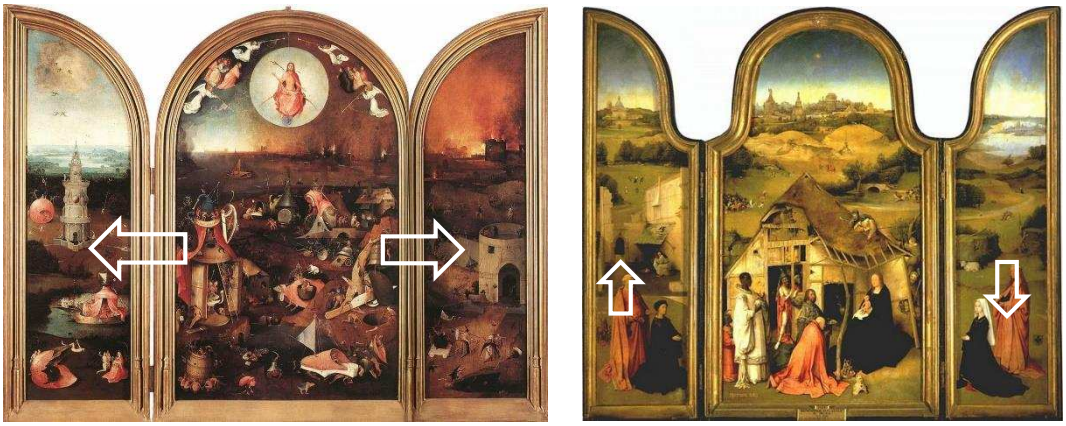
The Last Judgment (Vienna)



In this case, the central scene allegorizes the horrors caused by war and politics (the forced drownings at Grandson, etc.)[7]. From here, the guilty observer can choose to repent and still be rescued, or simply be taken to excruciating condemnation.

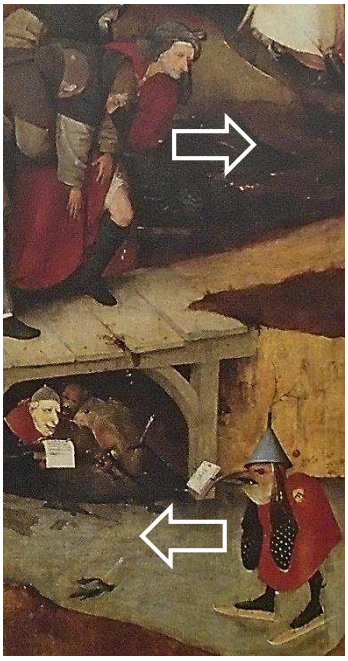
This same issue of individual responsibility was dynamically addressed by Bosch in other paintings.

Examples: *The Last Judgment* (Bruges); *Adoration of the Magi* (Madrid)[8]



In fact, with his multi-layered, complex designs, Bosch intended to appeal to the moral conscience of each individual, starting by himself.

Ending example: detail from *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (Lisboa)



The conflicting duality of Jheronimus Bosch himself.

Available for consultation
November 2015

Notes

[1] The most ingenious bidirectional artwork appears to be Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, whose hidden logic will be analysed elsewhere.

[2] In fact, the principle of symmetry is crucial for Bosch, who used it to design various kinds of narratives (e.g. *The Garden of Earthly Delights* – the unicorn on the first wing corresponds to the equine skull with the stick on the other wing, etc.). For more on the use of dynamic symmetries see *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*.

[3] As a matter of fact, besides the bidirectional symmetries, also the continuous sequences were ingeniously explored by Bosch (see the bibliographical reference given in the previous note).

[4] The symmetries are also vertical (e.g. the central panel of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* – the suggestive Imperial Orb at the top matches the vase of prostitution at the bottom).

[5] See the papers *The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch*; *Bosch the surdo canis*; and the book *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*.

[6] Bosch seized the double meaning of the owl: the one next to Paradise means wisdom, whereas the opposite represents the excesses usually associated to the night (transitioning to the nightly, hellish panel, and its great hangover. For more on the owls, as well as on the aforementioned advising figures, see the book referred earlier (pp.41, 108-109, 160-161).

[7] Bosch didn't have a naïve opinion about the ruthless Charles the Bold, who was nevertheless a great nationalist reference for the artist. Anyway, and despite addressing other specific events well-known at that time (e.g. the execution of Peter von Hagenbach, etc.), this central panel aims to summarize the brutality imposed by war and its politics, in a more general sense.

[8] The elaborate and sometimes subversive engineering of this triptych is decoded in the book mentioned before (pp.50-55, 147, 157-159; see also the paper *The (diabolic) oak of the Rovere Popes*. As for the triptych of Bruges, see pages 97-102).

O CRIPTO-BOSCH DE GUIMARÃES (II)

PAULO MARTINS OLIVEIRA

Nesta segunda parte dedicada ao *Tríptico da Lamentação* (Museu Alberto Sampaio, Guimarães), aborda-se de modo sistemático a respectiva engenharia simbólica, feita de ambiguidades e soluções de compromisso.

1. O tríptico deve ser lido da direita para a esquerda (na óptica do observador), o que na verdade corresponde, na perspectiva dos próprios personagens, a uma progressão da esquerda (-) para a direita (+)[1].

2. Na obra de Guimarães está deste modo inscrita uma evolução que, partindo do desespero humano, culminará na tranquilidade divina.

3. Assim, à direita para o observador, "S. Jerónimo" começa por representar o desespero, que por sua vez é associável ao Antigo Testamento e ao rasgar das próprias roupas (Gen. 37:34; 2Sm.1:11-12). Além disso, esse rasgar está ligado a golpes auto-infligidos na carne (Jer.41:5), aliás correspondendo à figura em questão, a qual interpreta assim, por sobreposição, um típico profeta judeu do Antigo Testamento.

4. A evolução prossegue imediatamente ao lado (já no painel central), com os homens chorosos, ou seja, um atenuar do dramatismo inicial, mas ainda assim não desejado e também associável ao Antigo Testamento (Lam.1:16-20).

5. O ponto de viragem encontra-se ao centro, onde S. João simboliza Cristo na cruz, ou seja, a referência para a paz de espírito e para a estoicidade (sendo disto exemplo os primeiros mártires cristãos, como S. Brás, etc.).

Exemplo comparativo

Tríptico de Guimarães, det. / *Lamentação* (Michelangelo) – crucificação alegórica através de Maria

6. Nesta sequência progressiva, no outro lado de "S. João" (ainda no painel central) os homens apresentam-se mais serenos (tal como as mulheres presentes).

7. Finalmente, no volante esquerdo e trajado de bispo, S. Brás simboliza o triunfo cristão da paz espiritual, por oposição simétrica ao dramatismo interpretado no outro volante (≈ desespero judaico).

8. A evolução da tragédia desesperada para a tranquila aceitação é visível em muitas pinturas que figuram a crucificação (agora num sentido vertical), onde a exasperada Madalena na base contrasta com o estoico e exemplar Cristo (no topo).

Exemplo comparativo

A Crucificação (Mestre da Virgo inter Virgines)

9. De facto, segundo a Igreja, cada fiel deveria aceitar tranquilamente a melhor ou pior sorte dada por Deus, mantendo a esperança por melhores dias, neste ou no outro mundo (≈ exemplo de Job; Roda da Fortuna).

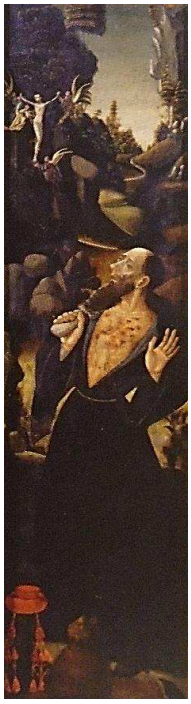
10. Todavia, tal perspectiva não isenta os fiéis das suas responsabilidades individuais (livre-arbítrio). Neste sentido, o tríptico de Guimarães apresenta uma característica escolha simbólica de natureza bidirecional $(\leftrightarrow)^2$: ou o caminho para o desespero (simbolizado pelo "judeu" (interpretado por S. Jerónimo), ou para a salvação (simbolizado pelo bispo cristão, ou seja, por S. Brás)[3].

11. Mesmo no caso de uma má escolha, a Igreja deixa em aberto a possibilidade do fiel se corrigir e evoluir. Neste caso, sobressai então a figura do penitente S. Jerónimo, dando início ao lento processo de purificação.

12. Neste contexto, à figura deste santo está igualmente sobreposta a imagem de S. Francisco de Assis recebendo os estigmas (i.e. a aceitação do sofrimento para que, no fim do processo, se encontre a paz de espírito).

Exemplo comparativo

S. Francisco recebendo os estigmas (Giotto) / S. Jerónimo no *Tríptico da Lamentação*



13. Já no volante final, o processo evolutivo confirma-se então com S. Brás a sugerir o derradeiro (apocalíptico) e triunfante S. Miguel submetendo o "demónio" (cf. ponto 28)[4].

Exemplo comparativo

S. Miguel (por Dürer) / S. Brás no *Tríptico da Lamentação*

14. Por seu turno, ao centro S. João representa o modelar Cristo na Cruz, como referido no ponto 5.

15. Assim, através de sobreposições, todas estas figuras compósitas realçam a ideia de chamamento, correcção e evolução, tomando por base o exemplo abnegado e inspirador de Cristo.

16. Em todo o caso, não deixou de se incluir uma típica alusão subversiva no culminante painel esquerdo: na parte inferior das vestes de S. Brás, as dobras do tecido formam dois olhos e uma boca, simbolizando quer a omnipresença da tentação, quer o facto de esta ser apenas uma obra de arte (traçada por um mero pecador), e não de uma efectiva criação divina[5].

Detalhe do *Tríptico da Lamentação* (vestes de S. Brás)

17. A interpretação de ambiguidades é pois determinante para a compreensão desta pintura (como aliás de muitas outras).

18. Por exemplo, no painel central, a inclusão de um negro introduz a sugestão dos três reis magos (na linha superior das figuras em primeiro plano, à direita).

19. Na verdade, a cena geral também representa um povoado "presépio", onde se funde o nascimento de Cristo com a Sua morte[6].

20. Do mesmo modo, a sugestão de "Cristo" na cruz (figura de S. João) é reforçada pelo posicionamento inferior de Maria Madalena.

21. Entre outros aspectos, a Madalena aos pés da "cruz" representa a Nova Eva, enquanto Cristo (João) alude ao Novo Adão, ou seja, a redenção do pecado original pelo sacrifício do Messias[7].

22. Do mesmo modo, e ainda ao centro do painel principal, a relação entre o alegórico Jesus "crucificado" e o verdadeiro Cristo caído sugere a cena da Descida da Cruz.

23. Em sentido inverso, os mesmos personagens fazem incluir quer a Ressurreição de Jesus, quer a Ascensão aos Céus (para além da Crucificação e da Descida da Cruz).

Exemplo comparativo (desenvolvimento do ponto 5)

Lamentação (Michelangelo) - para além da Crucificação, esta imagem versátil evoca a Descida da Cruz, a Ressurreição e a Ascensão de Cristo, bem como a Assunção de Maria.

24. Através de soluções de compromisso e sugestões visuais, o tríptico de Guimarães sintetiza diversas cenas bíblicas, que podem ser extraídas por meio de leituras dinâmicas (este expediente, que alia o engenho à economia, era na verdade comum à época).

25. Existem ainda outras narrativas codificadas, de âmbito mais pessoal, e que reportam a formação de base do (principal) artista responsável pela engenharia simbólica do tríptico.

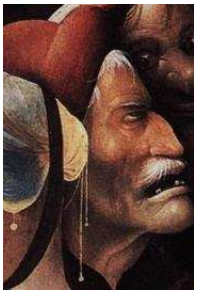
26. Esta questão começou a ser analisada na parte I deste estudo.

27. Como aí referido, existem elementos que aproximam o tríptico de Guimarães ao círculo de Jheronimus Bosch – o artista neerlandês[8] mais famoso em inícios do século XVI.

Exemplo comparativo

O Carregamento da Cruz, det. (Bosch) / *Tríptico da Lamentação*, det.

Jheronimus Bosch considerava-se "surdo"; já o discípulo de Guimarães retratou-se "cego".

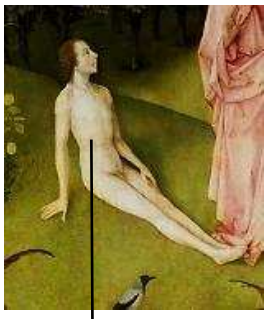


28. São agora aqui acrescentados outros aspectos. Por exemplo, a pequena figura vestida de negro no volante esquerdo constitui a versão adaptada de um outro personagem similar, presente na obra *S. João em Patmos*, de Bosch

29. Ainda sobre esta pintura de Bosch, o próprio S. João representa ainda S. Bavo de Gand (para além de Adão[9]), num exercício nacionalista típico daquele pintor nórdico.

Exemplos comparativos

Obras de Jheronimus Bosch / *Tríptico da Lamentação* (Guimarães)



≈

30. Tal como Jheronimus Bosch, também o "cripto-Bosch" de Guimarães recorreu à multiplicação adaptada de auto-retratos.

31. No tríptico em análise, e para além das duas figuras tratadas na parte I, igualmente a representação de S. Jerónimo simboliza o próprio "critpto-Bosch" de Guimarães (também Jheronimus Bosch fizera-se representar no papel daquele santo penitente, aliás mais do que uma vez).

32. Outra figura essencial a considerar nas relações artísticas do "cripto-Bosch" de Guimarães é o flamengo Francisco Henriques, em cuja obra se detecta a evolução do desespero para a tranquilidade (numa lógica similar à do tríptico de Guimarães, ainda que sintetizada).

Deposição no túmulo, det. (por Francisco Henriques)

33. É possível afirmar com segurança que a figura do próprio Francisco Henriques está presente, em forma de homenagem, na representação de S. Brás (volante esquerdo do tríptico de Guimarães).

34. A figuração alegórica e sugestiva de artistas era, na verdade, sistemática na arte da época, em Portugal e noutros países.

35. É muito provável que o "cripto-Bosch" de Guimarães tenha sido um dos artistas que Francisco Henriques trouxera consigo para trabalhar em Portugal.

36. A presença de obras em Guimarães[10] parece inserir-se numa lógica geral de valorização manuelina de um "Antigo Testamento" português, ou seja, a longa e necessária preparação para o advento imperial do Venturoso.

37. Por seu turno, existem fortes inícios que ligam Francisco Henriques ao próprio Jheronimus Bosch, o que explicará os reflexos em Guimarães, por via de um colaborador do próprio Henriques.

38. Ainda a respeito do mesmo tríptico do Museu Alberto Sampaio, existem outros elementos de interesse que importa desenvolver, nomeadamente quanto à respectiva autoria.

Disponibilizado para consulta
Dezembro de 2015

NOTAS

[1] Trata-se de um sentido de leitura comum, e que pode ser observado por exemplo na famosa parede esculpida de Tomar, onde o grande contraforte direito (para o observador) representa a vida terrena e guerreira, enquanto o oposto simboliza a vida celestial e pacífica (a transição encontra-se ao centro, na forma de uma iluminadora referência cristológica). Sobre a relação simultaneamente complementar e antagónica entre os dois lados de uma mesma composição, veja-se *O bem e o mal na arquitectura gótica*.

[2] Sobre esta matéria confira-se *The choices of Jheronimus Bosch*.

[3] No políptico de Nuno Gonçalves observa-se um esquema similar, com o "judeu" (acompanhado por evocações de morte) a contrastar simetricamente com monges que insinuam anjos eternos.

[4] As representações de S. Miguel com uma lança (por vezes uma lança-crucifixo, em vez da espada) evocam ainda S. Jorge. Estas mesclagens de santos eram constantes, e na verdade explicam ambiguidades que, em alguns casos, dificultam até uma identificação oficial e superficial. A propósito de S. Brás, veja-se uma escultura no MNAA (col. E. Vilhena), onde o santo surge com uma face feminina, representando também uma Santa Catarina que submete (≈ estrangula) o representante do mal, para o que se adaptou e transformou o milagre benigno de S. Brás.

[5] Este sinal de humildade dos artistas tem o seu expoente em Michelangelo, que se inspirou nos escritos do profeta Jeremias para distinguir a fé verdadeira das criações votivas dos homens (cf. *The Sistine Chapel and the new Jeremiah*).

[6] Noutros casos, essa ligação entre o nascimento e a morte/ressurreição≈renascimento era efectuada por via de um adormecido bebé Jesus que parece morto. Veja-se por exemplo o *Retábulo Montefeltro* (Piero della Francesca) ou a *Virgem do Prado* (Giovanni Bellini); cf. os capítulos iniciais de *Leonardo x Michelangelo*.

[7] A mesma relação entre Jesus no topo e Madalena na base simboliza ainda a vida comum que Ele teria abdicado para se comprometer com a Sua trágica mas superior missão (sobre este assunto confira-se *The androgynous John and Christ's duality*; *The transmutable Jesus and Magdalene*; e *A Bênção de Rafael*).

[8] Ainda que Bosch seja originário do que hoje são os modernos Países Baixos, o termo "neerlandês" deve ser aqui entendido numa perspectiva cultural e linguística mais ampla, que incluía também a Flandres (formando a Borgonha Neerlandesa, em especial o antigo Brabante). Na língua inglesa os conceitos estão melhor definidos, pois "Netherlandish" inclui os "Flemish" e os "Dutch".

[9] Confira-se de *The hidden devils of the Garden*.

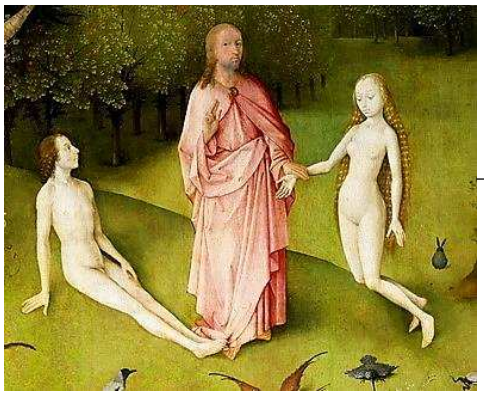
[10] Sobre este assunto, confiram-se as análises de José Alberto Seabra Carvalho e Ignace Vandevivere, tendo em vista a definição de um *corpus* específico.

ON THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF BOSCH'S GARDEN

PAULO MARTINS OLIVEIRA

Jheronimus Bosch[1] was an expert in reinventing and elaborating compositions of previous masters. In his exquisite creative process, Bosch often included and combined variations even from his own works, which in turn complement each other, as argued elsewhere[2].

Example from the *Garden of Earthly Delights*



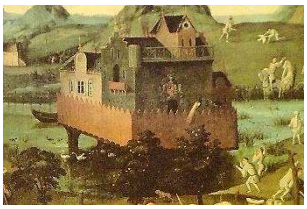
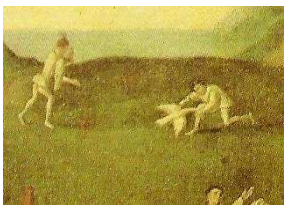
St. John on Patmos, by Bosch

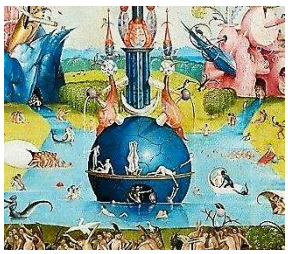
The Arnolfini Portrait, by Jan van Eyck

Regarding precisely the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, it should be noted that its general design was actually inspired by an allegorical scene painted some decades earlier by an artist today unknown. The picture in question is titled *The Marriage of Duke Philip the Good*, and hangs currently in Versailles.

Closer inspection swiftly reveals, for instance, that this landscape anticipates to some degree that of Bosch's *Garden* (especially of its first panel). Moreover, there are also other visual elements linking these artworks.

Examples:



But more importantly, there is a political correlation between these two paintings, although Bosch has updated and reversed the meaning of the original, anonymous picture, which partially explains the "upside down world" embedded in the newest *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

First of all, in historiographic terms, it is absolutely necessary to consider the Netherlandish political background as an essential key to open the cryptic works of Jheronimus Bosch, in which are ingeniously assembled various references and inspirations[3].

In this context, the older painting today in Versailles refers to the truly happy, independent Duchy of Burgundy, and more particularly to the leading, progressive Burgundian Netherlands, which were compared to a healthy Paradise.

The occasion depicted is the marriage of the sovereign Duke Philip the Good to Princess Isabel of Portugal, which established a political and dynastic alliance between the two countries. The covenant was officially signed in 1429, and the festivities occurred the following year, when the Princess arrived in the Burgundian Netherlands[4].

From that moment on the Low Countries boosted their prosperity, since they become the actual European emporium of the Portuguese gradual expansion towards Africa, India and Brazil[5].

After arriving in Lisboa, the goods were reshipped to Bruges and Antwerp, and then resold to various European countries. Interestingly, many of those exotic commodities were previously paid by the Netherlanders in artworks, which in a sense became a currency. As a result Portugal was receiving numerous paintings, while many workshops continued to open and flourish in several Flemish and Dutch cities (especially in the Brabantine region).

Furthermore, such cooperation with Portugal would make a significant contribution to the usually called Northern Renaissance of the 15th-16th centuries, which was characterized by an intense curiosity about complete novelties and by the questioning of traditional authority and its dogmas (starting with the true features and boundaries of the world)[6].

The Northern Renaissance began largely in the Low Countries (from where will emerge various foresighted scholars, cartographers, etc.)[7], and quickly spread to neighbouring countries (the Holy Empire, Denmark and England, for instance)[8].

The painting currently in Versailles thus celebrates the beneficial marriage to Isabel (and to Portugal itself). At that very occasion, Duke Philip even instituted the Order of the Golden Fleece, allowing himself to become a modern Argonaut, i.e. a symbolic navigator of Christ (a crusader; the mythological Golden Fleece ≈ the Christian Lamb)[9].

In this way, Philip equated himself to his new brothers-in-law, especially his close friend Prince Henrique (Henry) the Navigator, who was the main architect of the Portuguese expansion overseas (started earlier in 1415), and whose ships became famous for carrying on their sails the Cross of Christ (↔ the Sacrificial Lamb ↔ the Golden Fleece)[10].

Duke Philip the Good

Prince Henrique the Navigator

The second portrait is a detail from a large altarpiece rich in symbolic devices that celebrate the equitable brotherhood between the two small European countries[11].

In the meantime, during the 1460s-70s, the Burgundian Netherlands furthered its prestige under the command of the restless Charles the Bold (the only son of Duke Philip and Isabel), who proudly declared that the Netherlanders themselves were Portuguese as well[12].

However, following the tragic death of Charles, his only descendant Mary of Burgundy would soon marry Maximilian Habsburg – the heir of the Holy Emperor Frederick III.

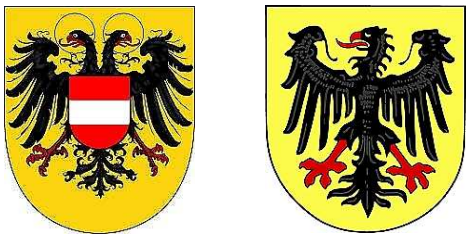
This controversial wedding was seen as the very opposite of the previous healthy/wealthy marriage between Duke Philip and Isabel (i.e. between the Low Countries and Portugal).

In fact, that marriage to Maximilian would condemn the Netherlandish autonomy, placing it in the orbit of the overpowering Holy Empire, which was immediately accused of repressing the nationalists, imposing excessive taxes, and draining out the Flemish-Dutch wealth.

In such a context, the marriage to Maximilian was even compared to a kidnap perpetrated by the Habsburgs[13].

However, on the other hand, it should be noted that this view was not unanimous within the heterogeneous Low Countries, since many Netherlanders were actually dissatisfied with the prior local centralized state that was being built by the equally ruthless Charles the Bold. Instead, they preferred to try to keep small, scattered regional autonomies, even under a foreign Habsburg administration, despite its faults[14].

For his part, Jheronimus Bosch was displeased about this unpatriotic path, and thus criticized even his beloved native city ('s-Hertogenbosch) and himself for the obedient (and corrupting) acceptance of the imperial Habsburgs.



The coat of arms of the Holy Empire and of its historical capital – the city of Aachen (Aken)

The medieval and the modern coats of arms of 's-Hertogenbosch (Den Bosch = forest, wood). The city had even welcomed Maximilian, who granted it the imperial eagle. This controversial tie would be traumatic (e.g. the siege of 1629, by the Republicans), and is still remembered in the heraldry of 's-Hertogenbosch[15].

The so-called "Tree-Man", i.e. the sinner, self-punishing Bosch personifying his dear but sinful city.

Indeed, even the artist's pseudonym "Bosch" is simultaneously self-punishing (the sinful, straying ´s-Hertogenbosch) and nationalist (the still-beloved, ever Dutch 's-Hertogenbosch).

This personal pseudonym had replaced the original family name "van Aken", which ironically (and embarrassingly) refers to the relatively nearby imperial German city of Aachen/Aken[16].

The Netherlandish Jheronimus Bosch was therefore nostalgic about the previous heavenly Burgundian Netherlands, which he allegorized in the first panel of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*[17].

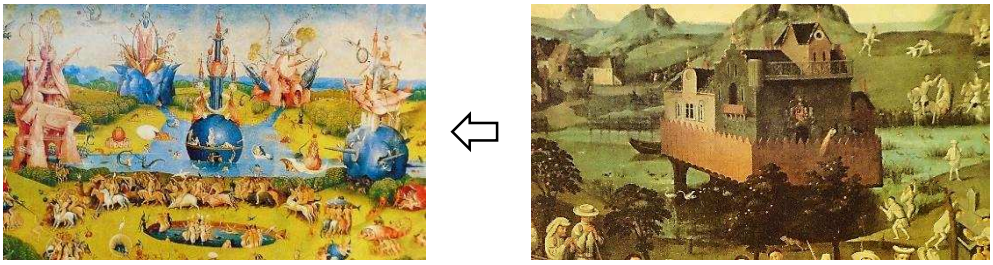
However, in that first section of the triptych, the peaceful Eden is starting to be threatened by the foreign ambition (the Habsburgs themselves are symbolized by means of typical anthropomorphic devices)[18].

Such impending threat would be consummated in the central panel. At its bottom, (nether ≈ low parts) is an allegorical representation of the "obscene" marriage between Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian, namely by means of subtle allusions to the female and male genitals (disposed symmetrically)[19].

Therefore, and generically speaking, this central panel is the exact opposite (upside down) of the good wedding feast of Duke Philip and Princess Isabel.

This detail emphasizes the idea of an inverted scenario (i.e. perverted, corrupted).

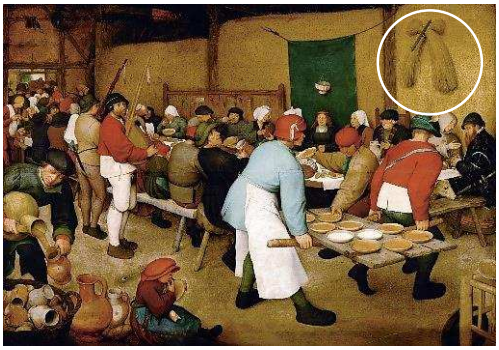
Also in this bottom area Bosch highlighted a large vase, which is a traditional symbol of prostitution[20], herein stressing the Habsburg orgy – in other words the seductive corruption of the local elites by the foreigners, whose symbol (an artful suggestion of the Imperial Orb) now dominates the upper part, being orbited by the four capitals of the old Brabant: Brussels, Antwerp, Leuven, ´s-Hertogenbosch.



The Imperial Orb on the water is a perverted reinvention of the honourable Netherlandish building depicted earlier in celebration of Duke's Philip marriage.

Comparative example. *The Threatened Swan,* by Jan Asselijn. In the wetlands, the now independent Dutch swan defends his nest from a swimming dog (the foreign ambition for the coveted Netherlands)[21].

But still on the subject of the damned marriage to Maximilian (i.e. to the Holy Empire), the sarcastic corrupted panorama created by Bosch would be redesigned by other compatriot artists with a similar hidden agenda[22].



The Peasant Wedding, by Pieter Bruegel. On the wall hangs the martyred Netherlandish-Burgundian saltire (just one of the political symbols embedded in this irresponsible feast).

In fact, Pieter Bruegel expressed and confirmed the lasting tribulation that Jheronimus Bosch had prefigured in works such as his *Garden of Earthly Delights*, or better said the famous, luxuriant garden of the Palace of Coudenberg (in Brussels, the local headquarters of the Habsburgs)[23], which will inspire other architectural and landscape designs, including the Palace of Versailles[24].

Depictions of the palatial garden of Coudenberg (currently the Warandepark of Brussels)

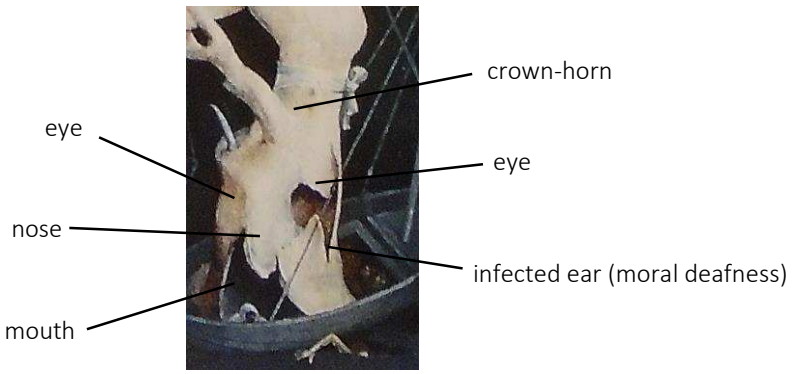
Allegorical depiction of the same garden, by Bosch (the imperial settlement was regarded as the defilement of a patriotic site).

Meanwhile, the great corrupting feast depicted in the large central panel will eventually culminate in the punishments of the third panel, featuring important references (e.g. the Song of Moses, in Deuteronomy 32:1-43)[25].

Thus, according to this chronological left-to-right sequence[26], the last panel represents the approaching, inevitable consequences, which are well symbolized by the so-called Tree-Man mentioned above (Bosch embodying 's-Hertogenbosch), who also personifies an hangover, i.e. the awful, inescapable aftermath of the ongoing dissolute feast.

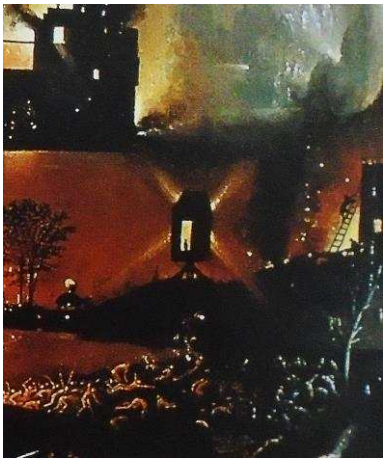
His torso-egg[27] serves as a decadent tavern, while the head suggests dizziness, sensitivity to sound, and absence (distant gaze).

Further emphasizing this notion of hangover, the limbs (arms-legs) rest on unstable clog-boats[28], as they transform into the diabolical faces of Maximilian (first limb), and of his main deputy Engelbert II of Nassau (second limb)[29].



The face of Maximilian, made from cavities and depressions[30].

But with regard to that third, hellish panel of Bosch's *Garden*, and in addition to its many purposeful allusions, it should be highlighted the emblematic windmill at the top, which summarizes the grim fate of the once leading Netherlandish territories.



Gone were the hopeful days of the "Hertogen", i.e. of the great Dukes, when Jheronimus Bosch was born and grew up. Even his esteemed city of 's-Hertogenbosch (proudly signifying the forest of the Dukes) was now reduced to "Bosch" – a somewhat daunting imperial woods. In fact, the same applied to the artist himself.

Available for consultation
December 2015

NOTES

[1] Concerning the preference of "Jheronimus" over "Hieronymus" see the infographics in the paper *Porquê "Jheronimus" Bosch?*

[2] See the book *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, and the paper titled *Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden*.

[3] The political viewpoint is argued in the following correlated studies: *The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch*; *As faces de Engelbert; Porquê "Jheronimus" Bosch?*; *Bosch, the surdo canis*; *The Delights of Coudenberg*; *Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden*; *The dating and signature of the Garden of Earthly Delights*; *The political consciousness of Pieter Bruegel*; *O cripto-Bosch de Guimarães (I-II)*; *The Netherlandish Birds*; *The deaf Bosch and the blind Bruegel*; *Bosch e a barca dos Lusitanos*; *The choices of Jheronimus Bosch*; *O Cântico Neerlandês de Jheronimus Bosch*, in addition to the book *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*.

[4] For more on the artistic implications of this covenant, see *The forgotten disciple of Rogier van der Weyden*.

[5] The Netherlanders themselves even had an important role in the improvement of the caravel – the emblematic ship of the 15th century's pioneering voyages. Indeed, this cooperation was expressed in multiple ways (for instance, the first settler of the Azorean Island of Jesus Christ (Terceira) was the Fleming Jacome de Bruges, etc.

[6] Despite being a southern country, Portugal then promoted a flourishing cultural movement that related to the Northern Renaissance. This Portuguese liberal, broad-minded trend would endure until the establishment of the Inquisition in the country, which occurred only in 1536. Even so, local freethinking artists continued to identify themselves with their northern fellows.

[7] This historical background is important for a better understanding of Dutch maritime enterprise, also based on the control of strategic routes and trading posts.

[8] Several northern emissaries and adventurers accompanied Portuguese expeditions into uncharted seas and coastlines. For instance, this was the case of the enthusiastic Danish Knight recorded as "Valarte" (also as Balarte); a good analysis of this case is presented by Michał Tymowski: *Why did Valarte die? Death of a Danish Knight during expedition to West Africa in mid-15th century*. Those pioneering, audacious voyages were highly regarded by northern scholars and freethinkers. In a well-known example, even the purely theoretical island of Utopia was discovered by a Portuguese sailor, according to Thomas More himself.

[9] Regarding the use of mythological characters and stories to address Christian subjects, see *Leonardo x Michelangelo*, pp.171-180.

[10] It is to be noted that a few decades later, the Argonauts were featured in medallions around the cloister of the Jerónimos Monastery (Santa Maria de Belém, Lisboa), which was the spiritual headquarters of the Portuguese discoveries and expansion overseas.

[11] See *Os Painéis de Avis*, as well as the papers *O mecanismo dos Painéis de Avis* and *The forgotten disciple of Rogier van der Weyden*.

[12] In turn, the Portuguese considered themselves as being Netherlanders. In just one of several examples from the 15th century, the capture of some Flemish vessels led Portugal to threaten war against England if the ships were not immediately returned to Flanders, which happened quickly. Later, during the Habsburg administration of the Portuguese Kingdom (1580-1640), the illicit conscription of local soldiers to fight the Netherlanders contributed to some extent to an uprising in Lisboa and to the regaining of full independence by Portugal. Seeing itself unable to fight in two major fronts, Habsburg Spain would recognize the independence of the Netherlands and (unsuccessfully) redirected its armies towards Lisboa. As for the ties between Portugal and the Low Countries, they were actually extended over the centuries. See for instance the city hall of Porto, deliberately inspired by Flemish architecture, or the Portuguese mobilization for World War I, being the Flemish issue a decisive call to arms. Even today the lion rampant is dominant in the heraldry of the Portuguese Army, which greatly evokes the historical links especially with Flanders (on this particular see Paulo Jorge Morais Alexandre: *A Heráldica do Exército na República Portuguesa no século XX*, p.485). As a matter of fact, in Portugal (as well as in Spain), the Low Countries were regarded since medieval times as some kind of idealized land of progress, tolerance and civility. This caused some envy among fellow Italian scholars and artists of the 15th-16th centuries, which helps understand some resented remarks of Michelangelo then recorded by Francisco de Holanda (however, the nationalist Michelangelo kept Bosch in the highest regard, since the elaborate criticisms designed by the northern artist were actually applicable to the current situation of the Italian Peninsula).

[13] Check some examples in the paper *The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch*.

[14] See *The deaf Bosch and the blind Bruegel*, note 6.

[15] Perhaps with some nationalist redemptive intent, since the foreign eagle appears to be "squashed" by the tree with the Dutch-Brabantine lions (this could explain the reappearance of the eagle, which in the meantime had been removed from the shield).

[16] In Bosch's symbolic mechanism, another relevant imperial city is Cologne, due to its relics of the Magi (≈ kings who submitted themselves to a higher authority, i.e. the Holy Emperor as the prime deputy of Christ on Earth, via Constantine and Charlemagne). This imperial rhetoric (based on the Magi) was satirized by Bosch in some works. As for the changing of names of certain artists, note that Pieter Brueghel would drop the "h" (Bruegel), for this letter symbolized the Habsburg dynasty.

[17] Also the tropical allusions appear to underline this concept. It is to be noted that João Paulo Oliveira e Costa had earlier suggested, in his biography of King Manuel I, that the Portuguese discoveries could be somehow related to certain exoticisms seen in Bosch's *Garden* (e.g. the elephant), as a consequence of the permanent contacts between Lisboa and Northern Europe (e.g. the "Portuguese" Rhinoceros engraved by Dürer). This educated guess can be, in turn, channelled into the line of reasoning now argued herein, concerning a broad, complex symbolic grammar which actually and ultimately addresses the new political and social condition of the Burgundian Netherlands themselves, and more specifically of the dying old Brabant. Therefore, the exotic allusions of the *Garden*, particularly those of its first panel, may be interpreted specifically as a nostalgia about the "marriage" to Portugal, at a time when the Low Countries resembled Heaven on Earth.

[18] For more on this issue, check *Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden*, and *The political consciousness of Pieter Bruegel*.

[19] Bosch systematically explored the principle of symmetry, which is in fact crucial to decode his elaborate, dynamic compositions.

[20] The vase relates to the double-edged Mary Magdalene, who was seen as a repentant prostitute. See *Bosch e a barca dos Lusitanos*.

[21] See *The Netherlandish Birds*. Note that the swimming dog can be compared to the imperial ships that came from the Rhine (i.e. from the Holy Empire).

[22] Also the sons of Pieter Bruegel will further develop the same concept of corrupting feasts (see an example in page 12 of *Bosch, the surdo canis*).

[23] This extravagant ambience was also witnessed by the most famous German artist of that time: "Albrecht Dürer spent much of 1520 and 1521 in the Netherlands […] In Brussels, the fountains, menagerie [≈ Zoo], and gardens of the royal palace resembled a paradise" (Anthony Grafton, *Bring out your dead: the Past as Revelation*, p.62). This reference to Coudenberg actually matches Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

[24] On the allegorical depiction of the marriage of Duke Philip the Good, perhaps its later presence in Versailles was intended to somehow evoke and acknowledge the original inspiration for the French palace and its own luxuriant gardens.

[25] See *O Cântico Neerlandês de Jheronimus Bosch.*

[26] In addition to this sequence (→), the triptych also veils a characteristic bidirectional reading (↔), as specified in *The choices of Jheronimus Bosch*.

[27] On this issue see "The egg of Bosch", in *Separata 1*, pp.7-16.

[28] A more obvious clog-boat appears in the middle panel of the *Last Judgment* currently exhibited in Bruges. It is to be noted that such combinations of different features were quite common at that time.

[29] About Bosch and Engelbert see *As faces de Engelbert*.

[30] See other metamorphosing depictions of Maximilian in *Bosch, the surdo canis*, p.15.

O CÂNTICO NEERLANDÊS DE JHERONIMUS BOSCH

PAULO MARTINS OLIVEIRA

ENGLISH ABSTRACT. Originally envisioned by Jheronimus Bosch, the *Table of the Seven Deadly Sins* addresses certain concerns that were characteristically merged into an ingenious composite image.

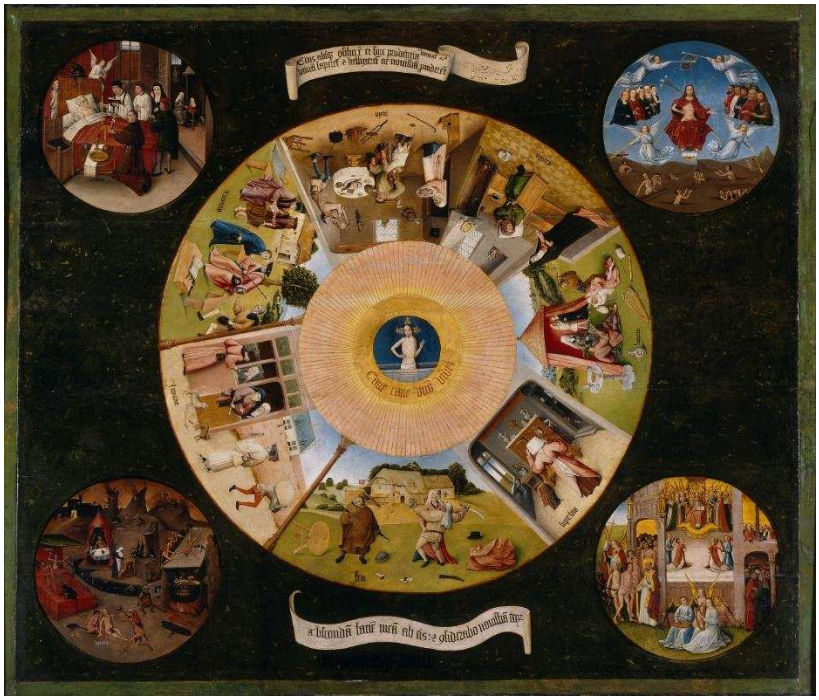
First, the adaptable round shape symbolizes both an eye (the constant watching by the Supreme Judge) and a Sun (Christ as the enlightening, guiding Spirit). In fact, even the worst sinners can find redemption, and for this reason the central resurrected Jesus is also ambiguously depicted as the ultimate baptizer (Mk.1:7-8), encased in a prefigurative monstrance that emphasizes Him as the rising, inspiring Saviour (expressing the correlation between physical transubstantiation and immaterial Holy Spirit).

But secondly, the same *Table* also refers to the current political and social condition of the "infected" Burgundian Netherlands. Indeed, this allegorical device comprises subtle but forceful allusions, including quotations from the Biblical Deuteronomy, more specifically from the Song of Moses, i.e. the warnings to the irresponsible Tribes of Israel, who were equivalent to the modern Netherlandish communities, still beloved but also led astray by "foreign gods" (≈ the corrupting Habsburgs).

These interconnected meanings of the *Table* link, in turn, to the S*cenes from the Passion of Christ* (Berlin), in which a symbolic, Christological image is surrounded by episodes of the supreme sins, i.e. His own agonies and tortures. It is to be noted that this central image also refers (by means of elegant compromise solutions) to the aforementioned Song of Moses (Deut.32:11), besides other overlapping references.

This context is thus essential to further understand the *Table of the Seven Deadly Sins*, which is part of the symbolic "clockwork" carefully engineered and assembled by Jheronimus Bosch. In fact, and regardless of whether the *Table* is an original, a copy or a supervised work, it must be highlighted the purposeful design itself, which certainly predates ca.1508-11, due to traceable influences on a Flemish disciple today known as "Francisco Henriques".

Efectivamente idealizada por Jheronimus Bosch, a chamada *Mesa dos Sete Pecados Mortais* não deve ser interpretada como sendo especificamente ou um sol ou uma íris ocular, pois representa estes dois elementos em simultâneo, como argumentado noutro lugar[1].



O sol luminoso (um sinónimo comum do espírito Santo) constitui uma referência para o bom encaminhamento dos fiéis, ao passo que, em sobreposição, a íris avalia se cada um segue a luz divina, ou se cai nos vigiados pecados capitais.

Do mesmo modo, a representação de Cristo erguendo-se do túmulo evoca a futura ressurreição de todas as pessoas para O enfrentar enquanto juiz supremo.

Este aspecto é sublinhado pela legenda escrita "Cave cave deus videt" (cuidado, cuidado, Deus vê).

De facto, "Deus" refere-se aqui tanto ao Pai como ao Filho, quer ainda ao Espírito Santo, na sugestão do sol (compondo a Santíssima Trindade).

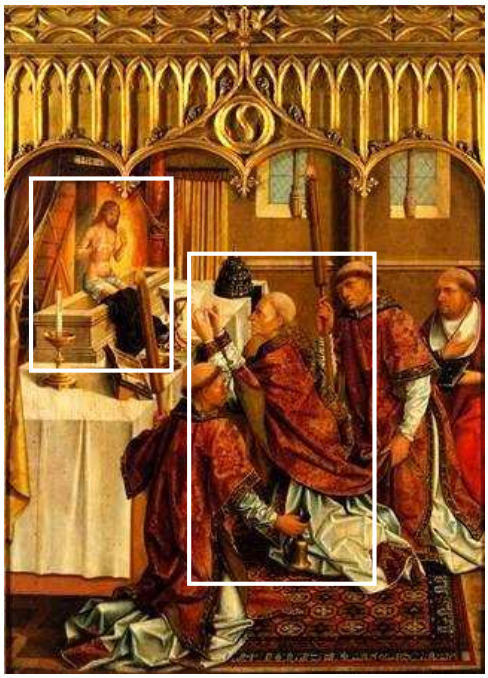
Neste contexto, a imagem de Cristo reporta a encarnação/materialização de Deus, o que por sua vez se liga à transubstanciação.

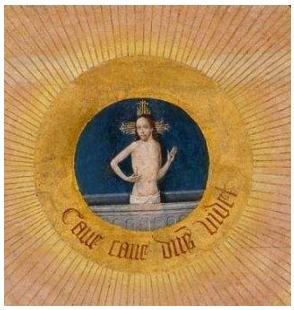
O sol em torno de Cristo é pois também a prefiguração de uma custódia radiante, em cujo centro se coloca o "Corpo de Deus" na forma de uma hóstia. Esta é assim encaixada numa luneta inferior, sendo que o conjunto hóstia-luneta representa a vitória do bem sobre o mal (tal como se observa por exemplo em tantas representações da Imaculada Conceição, triunfante sobre um quarto lunar).

No caso da Mesa do Prado, a inferiorização do mal não é expressa verticalmente, mas antes de modo centrífugo, ou seja, os pecados ficam na orla do círculo central, afastados pelo Espírito e Corpo de Deus. Na essência, o princípio é o mesmo que se verificará nas custódias radiantes celebrativas da transubstanciação e do Espírito Santo.

A este propósito, a Mesa relaciona-se com uma pintura hoje no MNAA, evocativa da *Missa de S. Gregório*. A autoria coube ao flamengo Francisco Henriques, o qual era na verdade um discípulo de Bosch[2].

Nesta obra de Henriques, o respectivo Cristo evoca a figuração concebida por Bosch, ao passo que o próprio S. Gregório representa o famoso artista de 's-Hertogenbosch.



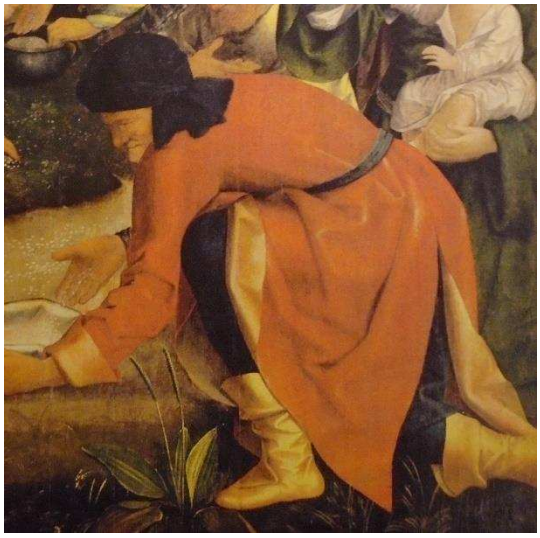


À esquerda, em cima, a *Missa de S. Gregório* pintada por Francisco Henriques (c.1508-1511).

Em baixo, o modelo original de Bosch (adaptado depois por Francisco Henriques). Este aspecto indicia portanto que a obra do Prado será anterior à cronologia da *Missa de S. Gregório*.

À direita, dois auto-retratos simbólicos de Jheronimus Bosch como S. Jerónimo.

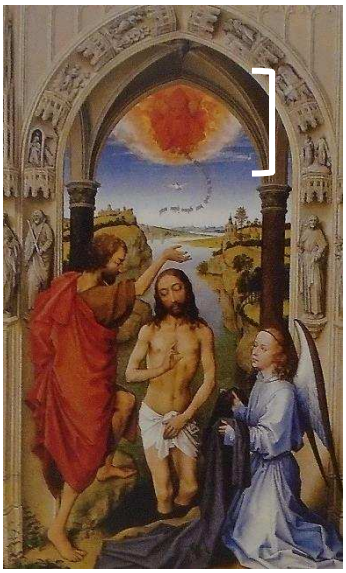
Exemplo de outra conexão entre Jheronimus Bosch e Francisco Henriques.



Mas para além desta questão, deve ainda ser recuperada e desenvolvida uma proposta pertinente, segundo a qual, na Mesa do Prado, a imagem de Cristo se encontra reflectida na íris ocular de Deus Pai[3].

Na verdade, através deste artifício (que em todo o caso funciona por sobreposição), o pintor ilustrou a satisfação do Pai ao ver o baptismo do Filho (Mt.3:17; Mc.1:11; Lc.3:22). Acrescente-se ainda que, numa camada sub-reptícia, os livres-pensadores humanistas viam nisto um indício de que Jesus começara o Seu magistério divino apenas a partir do baptismo, e que antes poderia ter tido inclusivamente uma vulgar vida marital (≈ Filho Pródigo)[4].

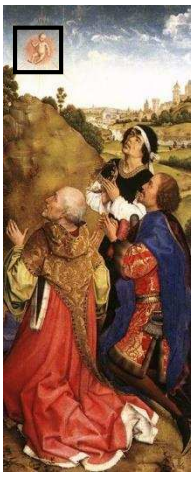
Por seu turno, deve ser também notado que Jheronimus Bosch era um especialista em redesenhar obras de velhos mestres, caso de Rogier van der Weyden[5].



≈

Rogier van der Weyden, *Retábulo de S. João Baptista*: Cristo sendo baptizado perante o "olhar" de satisfação do Pai.

Exemplo de outra conexão entre Rogier van de Weyden e Bosch (Corpo de Deus/Espírito Santo).



≈

Portanto, a Mesa de Bosch deve ser interpretada numa perspectiva compósita e dinâmica, onde diversos artifícios fazem desdobrar os significados da pintura. Note-se até que o "túmulo" de Cristo apresenta uma transparência subtil, sugerindo água baptismal que reflecte o Seu corpo[6].

O baptismo (i.e. arrependimento, lavagem, redenção → renascimento, ressurreição) sublinha o contraste entre os pecadores circundantes e a figura de Cristo, O qual em todo o caso emerge como o derradeiro Baptista (Mc.1:7-8; Lc.3:16), ou seja, a luz para que os pecadores se arrependam e se coloquem no caminho certo[7].

Todas estas questões interligam-se coerentemente com a referida legenda "Cave cave deus videt", sendo todavia de notar que existem duas outras citações pintadas na Mesa, desta feita reportando o Cântico de Moisés, o qual se encontra transcrito no capítulo 32 do livro bíblico do Deuterónimo.

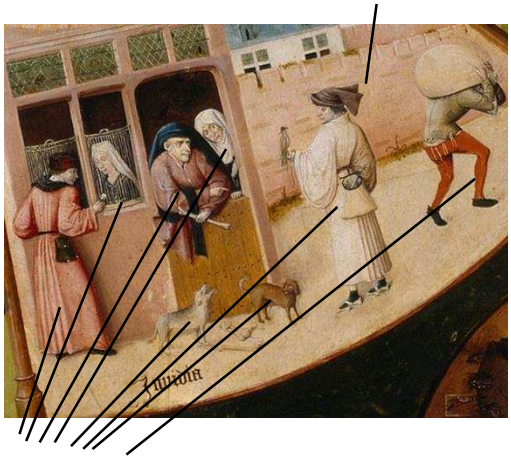
Desde logo, isto insere-se na lógica de Jheronimus Bosch em correlacionar as suas diferentes composições, pois numa outra obra – o Medalhão com Cenas da Paixão (Berlim) – ao centro existe uma imagem de simbolismo cristológico, que também alude ao referido Cântico de Moisés (Deut.32:11).

Essa grande ave compósita (fénix, pelicano, águia) representa um Cristo ressuscitado e pastoral, estando igualmente circundado por cenas de pecado, no caso as Suas próprias agonias e torturas[8].

Para Jheronimus Bosch, aquele Cântico era de especial importância, pois aí advertiam-se as Tribos de Israel sobre os perigos e consequências de se aceitarem deuses estrangeiros. Isso era na verdade transposto para a actualidade dos Países Baixos, onde as heterogéneas comunidades locais (≈ Tribos Israelitas) eram seduzidas a aceitar a nova e estrangeira administração dos Habsburgos imperiais.

Ainda sobre esta questão, e considerando que noutras obras Bosch relacionara o mártir Cristo com trágico Carlos o Temerário, é plausível que, ao centro da Mesa do Prado, a figura do Messias renascido expresse um desejo de ressurreição do orgulho neerlandês (esta linha artística seria sucessivamente continuada por artistas como Bruegel e Rembrandt)[9].

Note-se igualmente a este propósito que, na mesma Mesa, existem ainda subnarrativas nacionalistas que denunciam o actual clima político e social promovido pelos Habsburgos, destacando-se aqui uma das secções circundantes.



Todos estes personagens obedecem a uma lógica própria e característica de Bosch.

Em suma, independentemente de se tratar de um original, de uma cópia, ou de uma composição supervisionada, a *Mesa dos Sete Pecados Mortais* reporta, pela forma e sobretudo pelo significado, o complexo modelo gizado por Jheronimus Bosch, onde a questão teológica serve de capa à denúncia político-social.

Disponibilizado para consulta
Dezembro de 2015

NOTAS

[1] Confira-se *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, p.180.

[2] Existem na verdade vários elementos que apontam para essa conclusão. Acrescente-se que, se as obras conhecidas de Henriques não se distinguem pelos demónios, também várias de Bosch não se definem por essa característica, devendo-se realçar em contrapartida a existência de mecanismos subjacentes que claramente ligam os dois pintores nórdicos.

[3] A referida proposta (reflexo no olhar de Deus Pai) é sugerida no clássico de Walter Bosing, editado pela Taschen.

[4] Veja-se *A Bênção de Rafael*; *The androgynous John and Christ's duality*; e *The transmutable Jesus and Magdalene*.

[5] Outro exemplo dessa influência é o sol-Estrela da Natividade (Mt.2:9-10 + Ap.22:16) que Rogier van der Weyden pintara no *Retábulo de Santa Colomba* (Munique), e que posteriormente seria reinventado por Bosch no topo central da *Adoração dos Magos* (Madrid).

[6] Este detalhe não é casual, pois o uso de transparências era uma forma de introduzir novas mensagens, bem como de reforçar as já existentes. Diego Velázquez virá a ser um dos principais mestres no uso desse artifício.

[7] A conexão entre Moisés e Cristo faz relacionar o Antigo e o Novo Testamento, tal como se verifica por exemplo nos muros longitudinais da Capela Sistina (cf. *The Sistine Chapel of Michelangelo: The Law and the Judge*).

[8] Para além da mencionada referência ao Deuteronómio e de outros aspectos, a ave compósita ao centro representa a águia de S. João Evangelista, figurado aliás no reverso do mesmo medalhão. Deste modo volta-se a associar os dois Testamentos bíblicos, como era de facto comum na época de Bosch.

[9] Esta linha ainda incluirá Vermeer (cf. *The distracted working Dutch*).

THE LIBERATION OF BRUSSELS BY GERARD DAVID AND PIETER BRUEGEL

Paulo Martins Oliveira
January 2016

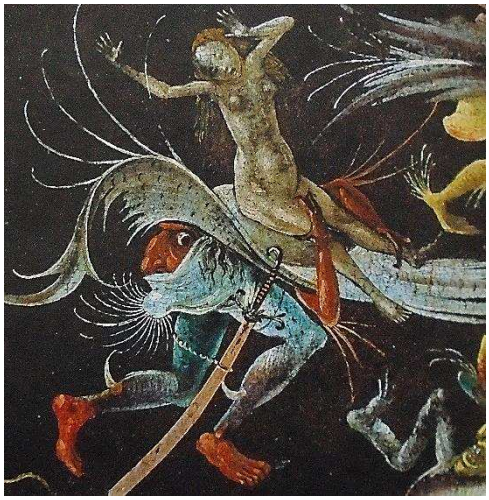
Following the lead of the ingenious and daring Jheronimus Bosch[1], some Netherlandish artists were criticizing the foreign Habsburg administration, which had selected Brussels as its head-quarters in the Low Countries.

Example by Gerard David, *Virgin and Child with four angels* (Met. NY)

Emperor Maximilian being surreptitiously mocked through a typical anthropomorphism[2], in this case referring to the famous, distinctive outline of his head, especially his nose.

Comparative examples – official portraits of Maximilian Habsburg (dets.)

Example of an allegorical, satirical depiction by Bosch: Maximilian kidnaping Mary of Burgundy-Netherlands



Example of an adaptation of Maximilian's distinctive nose into self-punishing depictions of Bosch and Anthonis van Aken[3]. In fact, painters often designed composite characters (≈ literary and theatrical creations)[4].

However, there is a subtle but important difference between Bosch and Gerard David, since this last one shows himself to be more optimistic on the fate of the Netherlandish territories. This is visible in Gerard's altarpiece dedicated to St. Michael – the patron saint of Brussels (as said above, the imperial headquarters in the Low Countries).

The coat of arms of Brussels

His battle is particularly tough because the "devils" actually inhabit his own cloack, i.e. the foreign Habsburgs headquartered in Brussels, more specifically in the celebrated Palace of Coudenberg and its luxuriant "Garden of Earthly Delights" (currently the Warandepark - Parc de Bruxelles)[5].

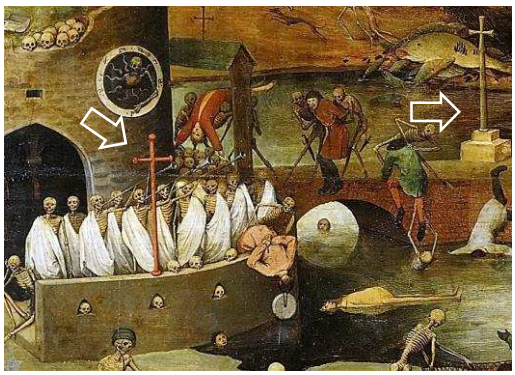
On the right side one can see a demon-eagle (the imperial eagle), accompanied above and below by hellish caricatures of Emperor Maximilian Habsburg and his predecessor and father Frederick III (regarded as the infamous architect of the annexation of the Burgundian Netherlands into the Holy Empire).

Furthermore, that local patriotic Archangel Michael actually pulls out the long crucifix, since it was a marker of the foreign Holy Empire (vs. the nationalist diagonal cross, i.e. the Netherlandish-Burgundian saltire).

Comparative examples

Jheronimus Bosch, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, det. A punitive expedition returning to the Holy Empire

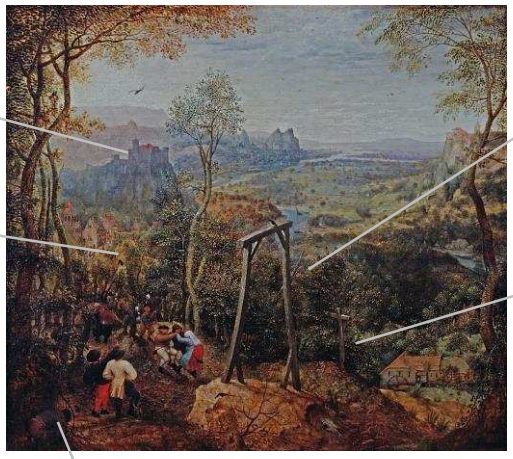
Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death*, det. The hellish Electors and Princes of the Holy (Roman) Empire wearing Roman togas (the Imperial Diet ≈ a diabolical Senate, SPQR)



Pieter Bruegel, *The Magpie on the Gallows*

allegorical representation of Coudenberg

a disguised house-head: the imperial surveillance and its informers (det)



the Habsburg repression

the imperial marker

Bruegel's challenge

As for Coudenberg (Koudenberg), it means “cold hill”, i.e. a small hill of Brussels on which the old palace was built.

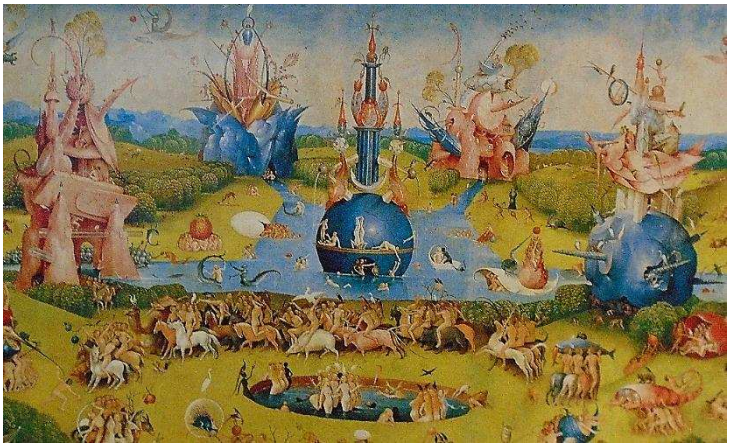
Such a hill was often allegorically transformed into a giant mountain, and sometimes even into a mountain range, symbolizing the alpine Austria (vs. the Low Countries), i.e. the foreign Habsburg administration, as seen in several of Bruegel’s paintings[6].

These exaggerated mountains also allegorized the entire “Habsburg-ish” Brussels and its seven hills: St. Michielsberg, Koudenberg, Warmoesberg, Kruidtuin, Kunstberg, Zavel, and St. Pieters-berg.

The profaned hills of Brussels (≈ the seven hills of Rome) are symbolized by the pointed mountains seen in the mentioned *Altarpiece of St. Michael*, by Gerard David, who nonetheless enhanced four of them, signifying the four pillars of the great Duchy of Brabant, which was the core of the Burgundian Netherlands (Quarters of Brussels, Leuven, Antwerp and ‘s-Hertogenbosch).

Comparative example

Jheronimus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, det. – the four capitals of Brabant around the “imperial orb”



A few decades later, Pieter Bruegel would reinvent and adapt the devices of both Jheronimus Bosch and Gerard David (besides other influences), in order to design artworks which combine penitent admissions and calls to resistance.

This is seen, for instance, in Bruegel’s *The fall of the rebel angels* – in fact the desired expulsion of the Habsburg devils from Brussels by its patron saint, but also by other angels, i.e. the heterogeneous Netherlanders united.

Pieter Bruegel, *The fall of the rebel angels*. Details such as the central "butterfly" or the ripped banner refer to the Habsburg Empire, while other elements allude to the dark Bruegel himself and to his guilty conscience (in the manner of Bosch).

In conclusion, the subversive nationalist art itself should be considered at different levels, since it was as evolving reality, as diverse as the Netherlandish communities and their most prominent artists.

Research paper available for consultation

All images in the public domain

NOTES

[1] Nonetheless, it has to be noted that Jheronimus Bosch was in turn inspired by nationalist artists such as Geertgen tot sint Jans. In fact, Bosch can be regarded as an axial figure, who refined, merged and reinvented various influences to create a specific visual grammar, which, in turn, would be adopted and transformed by others.

[2] For more on this see *Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden*; *Bosch, the surdo canis*; *The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch*; *On the origin and meaning of Bosch's Garden*; *The damned shield of ('s-Hertogen) Bosch*; and *The political consciousness of Pieter Bruegel*.

[3] Several workshops of the 15th and early 16th centuries resembled various architecture firms of the 21th century, since each was led by a head artist who envisioned, designed and reviewed the works in accordance with his own specific philosophy and visual grammar. The material execution was often handed to ranked assistants (in Bosch's workshop, his younger nephew Anthonis van Aken was the lead disciple, see *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*). Therefore, it is critical to understand the inner logic of Bosch's creations, not least because he will inspire the development of other nationalist grammars (e.g. Gerard David, Matsys, etc.), each different from the others.

[4] See *The merging of identities in old paintings*.

[5] See *The Delights of Coudenberg*; *Bosch, the surdo canis*; and *On the origin and meaning of Bosch's Garden*.

[6] See some exemples in *Bosch, the surdo canis*, p.10

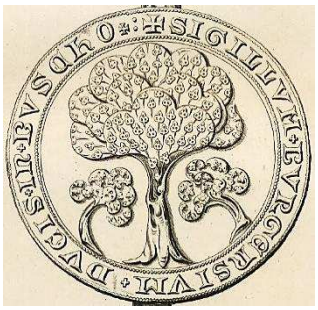
The damned shield of (‘s-Hertogen) Bosch

Paulo Martins Oliveira

January 2016

The resourceful Jheronimus Bosch adapted the coat of arms of his native city of ‘s-Hertogenbosch to denounce the corruption sown by the Habsburgs throughout the formerly leading Burgundian Netherlands (this issue is actually essential to understanding his artworks)[1].

In 1508 Emperor Maximilian granted the city the use of the imperial eagle, which would inspire Bosch to design an alternative version of the defiled shield.



The original coat of arms of ‘s-Hertogenbosch (until 1508)

Drawing by Bosch, *The field has eyes, the forest has ears* (between 1508-1513) Staatliche Museen, Berlin

Thus, the side trees were transformed into ears; the leaves fell as eyes; the tree itself is now a wreck (summarizing the current situation of the constricted forest behind ≈ 's-Hertogenbosch).

In other words, the original heavenly tree (≈ the Tree of Life) is now a tree of sin and decadence (≈ the degenerate Netherlandish Eden).

The drawing is titled *The field has eyes, the forest* [*or woods*] *has ears*, which actually is a warning on the oppressive, closely-watched ambience of 's-Hertogenbosch. In addition to this, the representative defiled tree features a specific biblical passage, sarcastic in relation to self-indulgence and weak commitment, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man [Christ] has no place to rest" (Matt.8:20).

In this biblical sense, "foxes" and "birds" allude to the instinctive selfishness of most people, which Bosch adapts in order to address the self-indulgent acceptance of the foreign domination.

But furthermore, in the early 16th century, foxes (as well as wolves and dogs) allegorized the imperial soldiers and officers[2], while birds (except the white ones)[3] symbolized the imperial government and its corrupting courtiers, especially the various regional stadtholders.

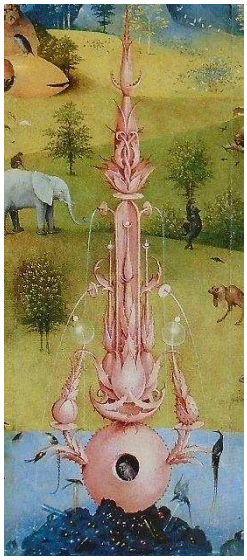
These birds (the regional deputies) were orchestrated by an owl, i.e. a larger (but also subordinate) bird of prey, which embodies the sinister, oppressive atmosphere of imperial vigilance.

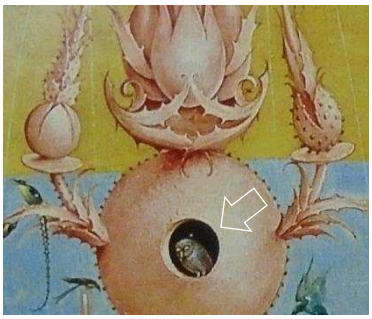
Comparative example
Geertgen tot sint Jans, *The Legend of the Relics of St. John the Baptist*

Allegorical depiction of Emperor Frederick III with a zoomorphic suggestion of an owl (his instrument of control over the Low Countries).

In fact, Geertgen tot sin Jans was one of the influences of Jheronimus Bosch, particularly in terms of patriotic vocabulary.

Example from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*





det.

Anthropomorphic fountain symbolizing Frederick III with the "abdominal" (subordinate, lower) owl, besides other lesser birds[4].

In the late 1400s and early 1500s, the owl referred to Engelbert II of Nassau – the Lieutenant General of the Low Countries, who was also symbolized by a hawk.

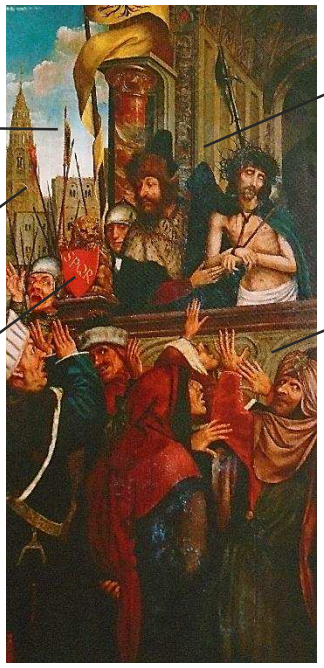
Official portrait of Engelbert II of Nassau[5].

When Engelbert died in 1504, he was succeeded by both William de Croÿ (as governor) and Henry III of Nassau-Breda (Engelbert's nephew), who was then appointed "drossaard" (sheriff) of Brabant – the core of the former Burgundian Netherlands, comprising the regions of Brussels, Antwerp, Leuven and ´s-Hertogenbosch.

Jheronimus Bosch, *Nest of owls* – specifying the higher delegate authorities.

Two official portraits of Engelbert III of Nassau-Breda.

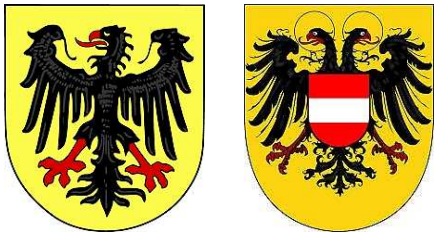
Satirical representation of the "owl" Henry III of Nassau-Breda, by Quentin de Matsys, *Ecce Homo*[6].


The flags of the Habsburg Empire (≈ the Roman Empire)
The great Cathedral of Antwerp (≈ the proud past of the Low Countries)
The abused, outraged Netherlandish lion forced to hold the imperial shield SPQR
The owl Henry III as the local High Priest, mocking the nationalist memory of the martyred Charles the Bold
The corrupted local elites

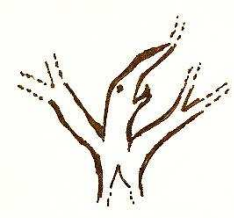
Hierarchically above the owl (and the equivalent hawk) was the great eagle, i.e. the Holy Emperor.

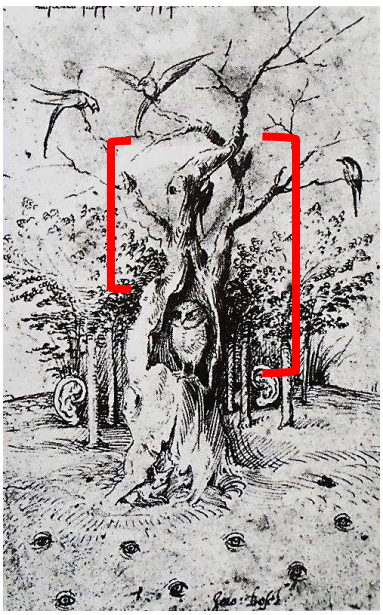
Comparative example

The founding Emperor Charlemagne and the imperial eagle (by Dürer, det.).



The imperial eagle of Aachen/Aken (the historical capital of the Holy Empire) and the double-headed imperial eagle.

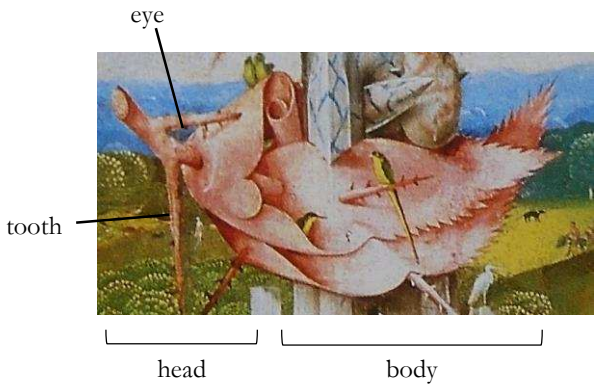




The eagle (Emperor) with the "abdominal" owl (≈ the examples shown in pp.2-3)

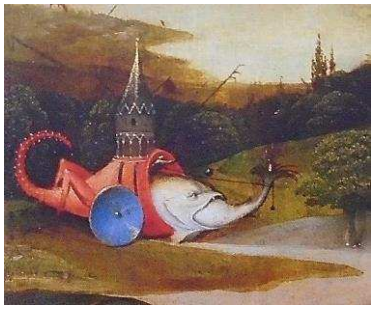
In fact a closer look reveals the zoomorphic shape of a diabolical eagle above the owl. As evidenced elsewhere[7], Jheronimus van Aken "Bosch" was indeed an expert in the design of such artifices (often involving the merging of features).

Example from *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (central panel) – a heinous fish-duck.



These subtle, hidden devils are related to other more obvious composite creatures (Bosch's works bind each other, reinventing and developing the same patriotic message)[8].

Examples from *The Temptation of St. Anthony*.

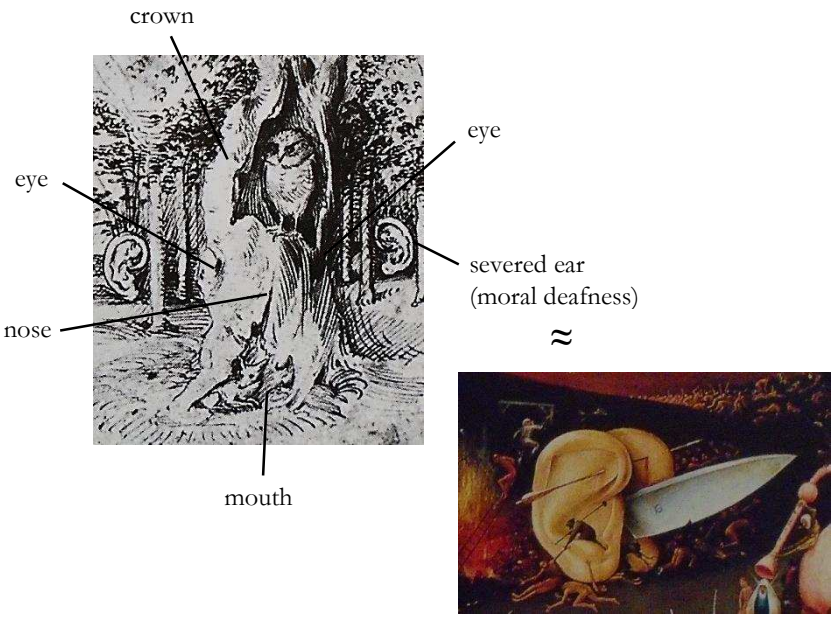


In view of Bosch's symbolic grammar, the drawing in Berlin is decoded as follows:

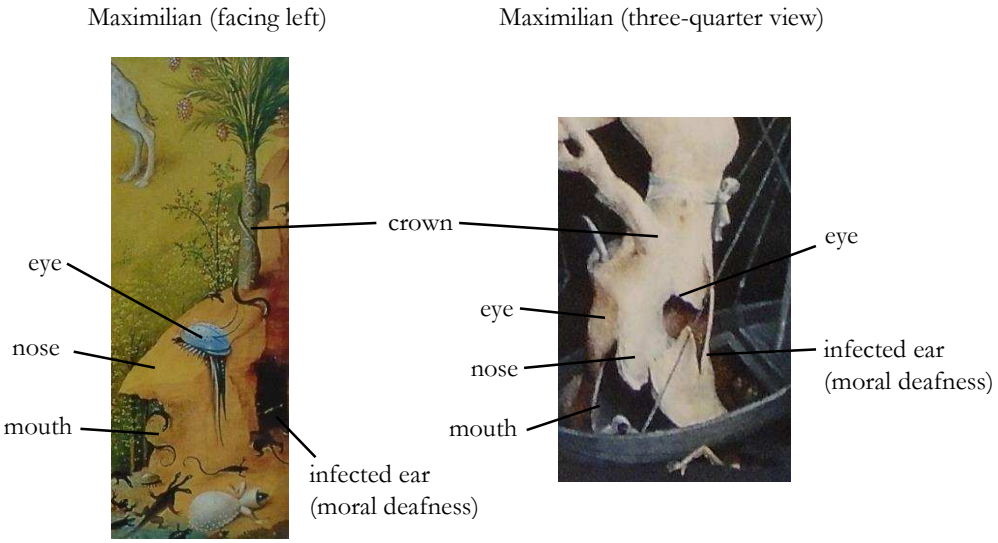
The imperial network of deputies and courtiers
Maximilian Habsburg (the supporting eagle)
Henry III of Nassau-Breda (the local, subordinate owl)
The soldiers and low-ranked officers (≈ jailors, executioners, thieves)

Moreover, the works of Jheronimus Bosch must be seen as boxes inside other boxes.

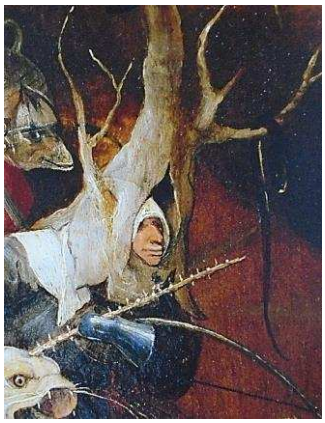
Detail – The corrupting face of Maximilian Habsburg



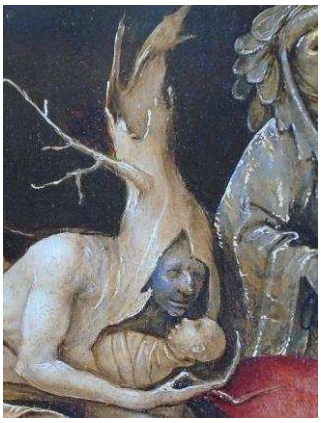
Comparative examples – *The Garden of Earthly Delights*[9]



Other examples of tree-crowns (*The Temptation of St. Anthony*)

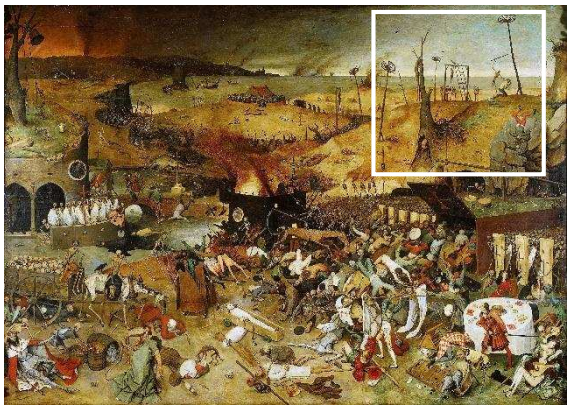


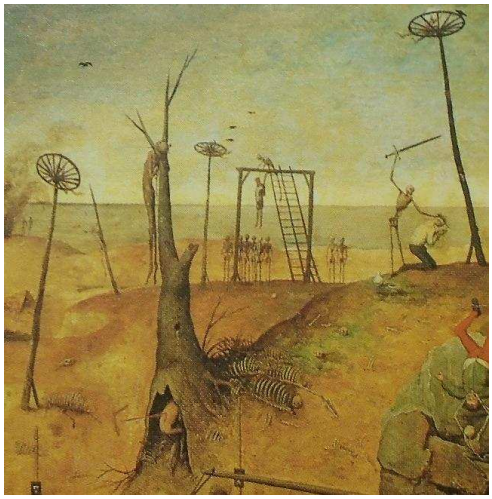
Maximilian Habsburg



The tragic Joanna the Mad, holding the Anti-Christ (the future Charles V)

Later example of an anthropomorphic head-tree.
Pieter Bruegel, *The Triumph of Death* (summarizing allegorically the Habsburg administration of the Low Countries).





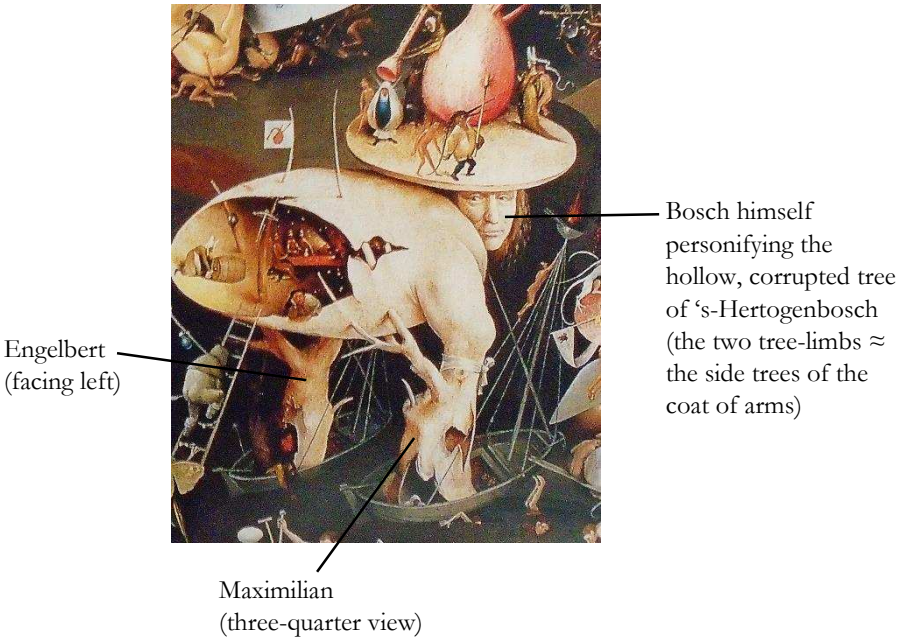
≈

(det.) the head-tree in front of a devastated "forest" of death (most likely a reinvention of Bosch's drawing).

Meanwhile, the "peeling" of the drawing in Berlin reveals another hidden layer, namely a satirical head facing right, embedded in Maximilian's diabolical great face.

The subaltern Henry III of Nassau-Breda[10]

Comparative example – the previous hierarchical relationship between Emperor Maximilian and his Lieutenant General Engelbert (*The Garden of Earthly Delights*, det.)


Bosch himself personifying the hollow, corrupted tree of 's-Hertogenbosch (the two tree-limbs ≈ the side trees of the coat of arms)
Engelbert (facing left)
Maximilian (three-quarter view)

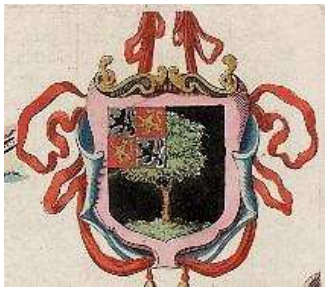
Therein Maximilian Habsburg and Engelbert are represented separately. However, their symbols merge below:

Among other meanings, this ruling bird features both an eagle (Maximilian) and a subordinate hawk (Engelbert).

Indeed, Jheronimus Bosch was constantly revolving around the nationalist issue, always finding new variations and devices to address it. In such a context, in the drawing in Berlin, the owl and the disguised eagle (two birds of prey) can be considered synonymous with the double-headed imperial eagle, now topping the tree of ‘s-Hertogenbosch.

Later, during the Dutch Independence War, the eagle was naturally removed from the city’s coat of arms (A), but it would surprisingly reappear (B), perhaps with a sarcastic, redemptive intent.

(A) The coat of arms of ‘s-Hertogenbosch, 17th century

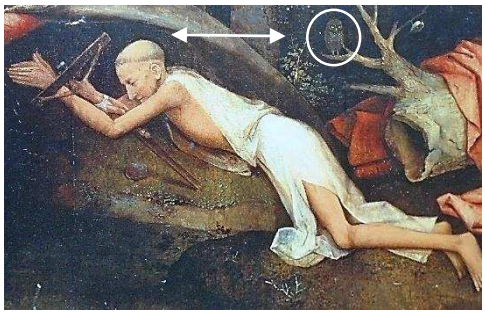


(B) The current shield of the city

The ducal crown recalling the great Hertogen (the sovereign Dukes)
The Dutch and Brabantine lions on the local tree
The foreign imperial eagle apparently "squashed" (?) by the local nationalist symbols; moreover, the shield of the eagle is just the Austrian of Frederick III, and not the Austrian/Burgundian-Netherlandish of Maximilian
The golden tree on a dark background (a reinvention of the shield of Brabant; also the exact opposite of the imperial layout – a black figure on a golden background

Nevertheless, as for the owl, it is to be noted that this gloomy bird also has a more general meaning (the dark, nightly side of each one)[11], referring inevitably to Jheronimus Bosch himself, more specifically to his fallible side, since he was receiving well-paid commissions from the Habsburgs and their deputies (which is why he considered himself to be morally deaf; the surdo canis[12] ≈ the owl, known to have poor hearing).

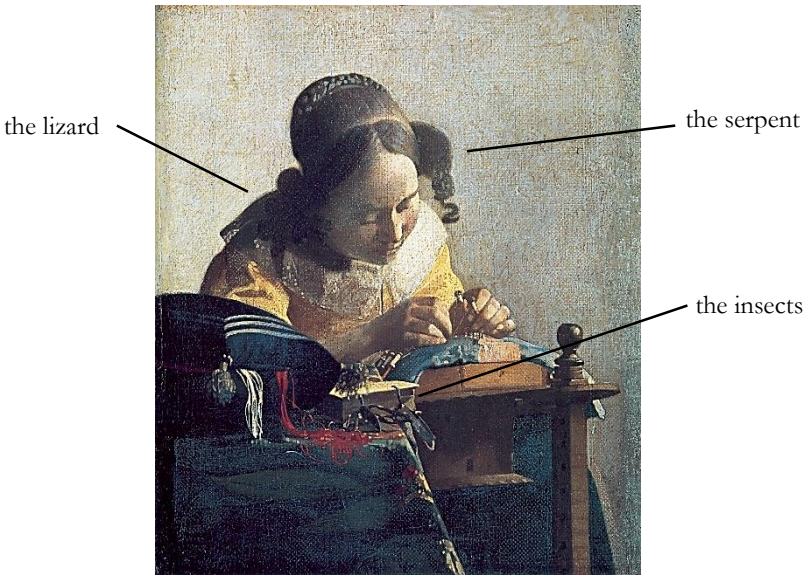
Examples of the allegorical inner conflicts and struggles of Jheronimus Bosch (dets.)



In these cases, the artist's fallible side is represented by the owl and the northern bald ibis[13]. At that time, such encoded self-criticisms and admissions were actually quite common among painters, and intended to shorten time in Purgatory (instead of buying indulgences, for instance)[14].

As a final remark, it is important to keep in mind that Bosch played a key role in developing a "warning art", made of many correlated subtleties and which uses both moral and religious references to ultimately address patriotic concerns.

This ingenious, challenging method was adopted and individualized by various Flemish and Dutch artists throughout the 16th and 17th centuries (even after the Independence), among them Gerard David, Mabuse, Quentin Matsys, Pieter Bruegel, Rembrandt and even the actually defiant Johannes Vermeer.



Examples of some of the allegorical elements moulded in Vermeer's *The Lacemaker*, integrating a derivative grammar about the new foreign threats and temptations[15].

Research paper available for consultation

All images in the public domain

NOTES

[1] See the references mentioned in note 3 of *On the origin and meaning of Bosch's Garden*.

[2] This matter is addressed in *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*.

[3] White birds symbolized the immaculate patriotism – see *The Netherlandish Birds*.

[4] For more on this and other anthropomorphisms, see *Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden*; *Bosch, the surdo canis*; *The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch*; *On the origin and meaning of Bosch's Gardern*; and *The political consciousness of Pieter Bruegel*.

[5] See *As faces de Engelbert*.

[6] This picture was delivered directly to the Queen of Portugal, which is why the satirical allusions to the Holy Empire are particularly obvious. After ensuring the monopoly of the spice trade, the Portuguese Kings tried to obtain in Rome the recognition of a worldwide imperial dignity, which led to a diplomatic and artistic "war" with the Holy Empire, in which both sides were commissioning provocative artworks from the renowned Netherlandish artists.

[7] See the references mentioned above (note 4).

[8] For more on this matter, see *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*.

[9] See the references mentioned above (note 4).

[10] As will be shown elsewhere, this detail relates to another similar device (also regarding Henry III), which dates Bosch's drawing somewhere between 1508 and 1513.

[11] See for instance: Cranach's *Penitent St. Jerome*, currently in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (the owl vs. the good ways of Christ). Furthermore, the owl itself has a meaning of knowledge – an ambiguity which was harnessed by Bosch (see *The choices of Jheronimus Bosch*, note 6).

[12] See *Jheronimus Bosch, the surdo canis*.

[13] See *The Netherlandish Birds*.

[14] In the lower right-hand corner of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, the recently deceased Engelbert II of Nassau enters directly into Hell, naively trying to protect himself under a useless indulgence; the smaller document is a typical brief on the sins of Engelbert, who emerges still dressed in a version of a Roman (≈ Imperial) toga, whose black and yellow brooch (fibula) satirizes the Habsburg insignia.

[15] See *The distracted working Dutch*.

MABUSE'S SURDO CANIS – PRELIMINARY NOTE

Paulo Martins Oliveira

January 2016

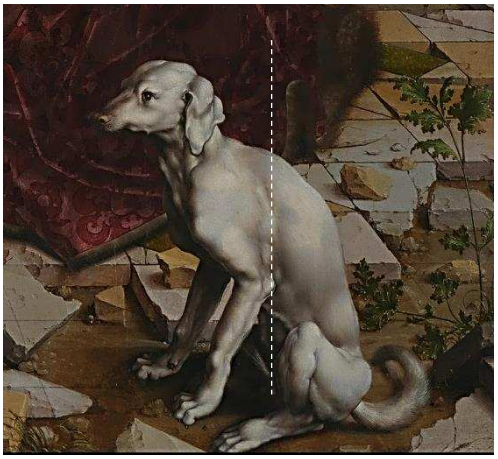
Mabuse (Jan Gossaert)[1] was one of the Netherlandish artists who, following the lead of Jheronimus Bosch[2], surreptitiously accused the Habsburgs of corrupting the Low Countries and undermining its national identity[3].

In this regard, *The Adoration of the Kings* currently exhibited in London (National Gallery) is actually a reference in the art of encoding both patriotic messages and self-criticisms (due to the self-indulgent acceptance of the new foreign rule).

This preliminary contribution simply points out the omnipresence of the inspiring Bosch, whose symbolic grammar was at that time adapted and individualized by various painters, including Mabuse himself (†1532), but also Gerard David (†1523) and Quentin Matsys (†1530), among others.

Thus, on the lower right is visible a peculiar deformed dog: the rear paws resemble big human feet; the corresponding legs are too short; the nose holes are quite odd; the abnormal ears actually cover its hearing; the body itself can be severed vertically in half[4].

In other words, this is a reinvention of Bosch's meaningful surdo canis[5].



Furthermore, the posture of Mabuse's dog suggests a defecation, having a significance that will be later adopted by artists such as Pieter Bruegel (e.g. the lower left of *The Magpie on the Gallows*).

As a final remark, it has to be noted that this dog is actually just the beginning of a telling example of how art can be provocative and ingenious.

Research paper available for consultation

All images in the public domain

NOTES

[1] The adopted name “Mabuse” is actually meaningful (≈ Bosch).

[2] In turn, Bosch had reformulated and redesigned patriotic devices from previous masters, such as Geertgen tot sint Jans.

[3] See the paper *O Pecado de Mabuse*, regarding a painting currently in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza.

[4] Moreover, one of its front legs shows a long vertical “wound”, which is also purposeful.

[5] For more on this matter, see – *Bosch, the surdo canis*.

LEONARDO AND THE BOSCHIAN TRIBUTE (I)

Paulo Martins Oliveira

January 2016

As argued elsewhere, there are a number of evidences linking Jheronimus Bosch and Leonardo da Vinci[1].

Examples of adaptations from Bosch

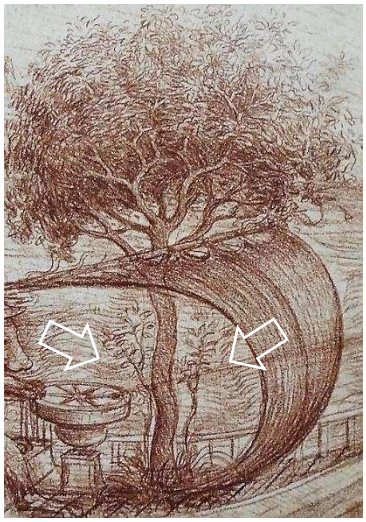
Leonardo da Vinci, *Allegory with wolf and eagle*, ca.1516
Royal Collection, Windsor Castle

The Ship of Fools

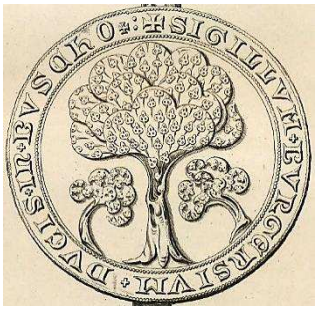
The Garden of Earthly Delights, det.

In this regard, it is possible to stress that Leonardo's *Allegory with wolf and eagle* (ca.1516) is indeed a tribute to the recently deceased northern fellow (†1516), whose ingenious and surreptitious accusations about foreign ambition suited perfectly the Italian situation as well[2].

As a matter of fact, there are subtle but significant details corroborating such a conclusion. For instance, it is visible that the tree on board is symmetrically flanked by two smaller ones, which corresponds to the distinctive coat of arms of 's-Hertogenbosch – a particularly important reference for Bosch[3].



det.



The inspiring coat of arms of 's-Hertogenbosch and examples of allegorical adaptations by Bosch (transforming the side trees into ears and limbs, respectively).

Nevertheless, Leonardo's drawing contains other references to Jheronimus Bosch himself, which is to be mentioned in future contributions.

Research paper available for consultation

All images in the public domain

NOTES

[1] See *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, pp.49-51, 74, 128-130, 144-147, 167; and page 11 of *The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch*.

[2] Despite de differences within the Italian Peninsula, there was a shared cultural consciousness binding the various communities (e.g. Machiavelli's writings), which was comparable to the situation of the Low Countries (≈ the divided and sometimes rival Tribes of Israel, enslaved or simply hypnotized by foreign powers).

[3] In addition to the mentioned in the paper *The damned shield of ('s-Hertogen) Bosch*, there are other important elements to take into consideration.

BRUEGEL'S TOWER OF HOPE AND PENITENCE

Paulo Martins Oliveira
January, 2016

Following and reinventing the symbolic devices of the late Jheronimus Bosch, the also Brabantine-born Pieter Bruegel would further criticize both the foreign imperial Habsburgs and the corrupted local elites[1].

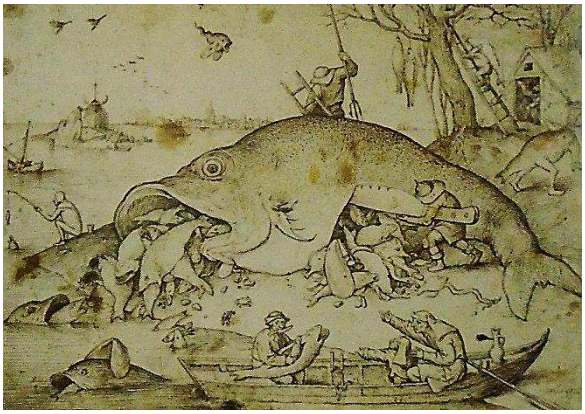
In this context, *The Tower of Babel* currently exhibited in Vienna should be seen in a double surreptitious perspective (in addition to the obvious but superficial biblical account, Gen.11:1-9).

Therefore, and given the allegorical nature of art, the painting in question is decoded as follows:

1 - The hope for the definitive, absolute crumbling of the overpowering Habsburg domination, especially following the abdication of Charles V.

Comparative example

Pieter Bruegel, *Big fish eat little fish* – actually an allegory on the hoped-for implosion of the Habsburg domination and its vast network of hierarchical authorities.



2 - The Flemish-Dutch ordeal, i.e. the hard but redemptive Purgatory of the Netherlanders themselves, who were already paying for their irresponsible and mercenary acceptance of the Habsburgs. Moreover, Babel is synonym of Babylon, which had enslaved the Tribes of Israel (≈ the heterogeneous Netherlandish communities)[2]. The Babylonian captivity was regarded as a divine punishment for the corruption of the Israelites themselves, who nonetheless remained believers in their redemption and liberation, which eventually would occur.

Comparative example

Domenico di Michelino, *Dante and the Divine Comedy*[3] – this painting should be seen as containing a left-to-right sequence, regarding the recent history of Florence (14th-15th centuries: Hell→Purgatory→New Jerusalem), besides other overlapping meanings[4].

In summary, Pieter Bruegel regarded the Habsburg rule as a (crumbling) Purgatory. As a matter of fact, in the mid-1560s, the hope for a large-scale revolt was hanging in the air, and Bruegel nurtured it with his art.

Research paper available for consultation

All images in the public domain

NOTES

[1] See the references mentioned in note 3 of *On the origin and meaning of Bosch's Garden*.

[2] See the English abstract of *O Cântico Neerlandês de Jheronimus Bosch*.

[3] Dante's Purgatory ≈ Bruegel's Tower. The inspiration from Dante is also corroborated by an important detail that deserves a specific analysis, since it relates to other artistic sources.

[4] E.g. Hell: Rome (the pope as the Devil); Purgatory: the Holy Empire (Adam and Eve as the imperial couple); New Jerusalem: Florence.

BOSCH AND THE EYCKIAN INFLUENCE

Paulo Martins Oliveira

January 2016

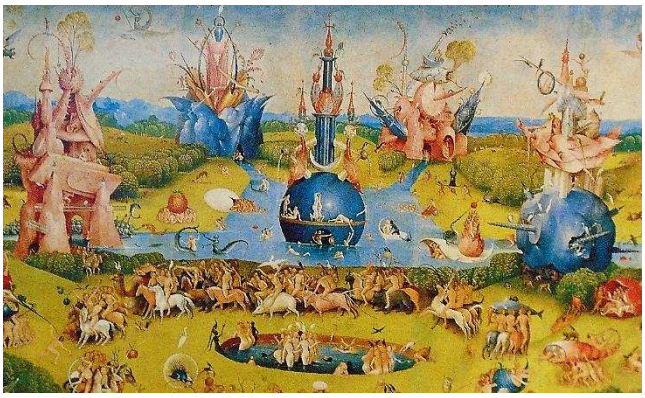
Jheronimus van Aken "Bosch" reinvented some old artworks of previous masters, such as Hubert and Jan van Eyck (in a sense ≈ Goessen and Jheronimus van Aken). As shown elsewhere[1], Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* includes allusions to the *Arnolfini Portrait*, but also to the lower panel of the *Ghent Altarpiece*[2]. However, it has to be noted that this last Eyckian model was previously embedded in a satirical reinvention of *The wedding of Duke Philip the Good*, in order to criticize the new covenant, this time with the Holy Empire[3].

In this way, Bosch's *Garden* illustrates the irresponsible worship of the Habsburg imperial orb[4] by the Netherlanders, in particular by the four branches of the great Duchy of Brabant (Quarters of Brussels, Antwerp, Leuven and 's-Hertogenbosch), i.e. the core of the prosperous Burgundian Netherlands. As always, Bosch revolves around the same fundamental idea: the times of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden were glorious and enthusiastic (under the rule of the Hertogen, i.e. of the great sovereign Dukes, namely Philip the Good and Charles the Bold), whereas the current situation is reduced to a decadent orgy of self-indulgence and Habsburg corruption (leading everyone to Hell).

• The golden age – *The Ghent Altarpiece*, det.

Underlying meaning: the four Quarters of Brabant converging to the Christian Lamb ≈ the mythological Golden Fleece reinvented by Philip the Good[5]. Thus, this image also represents a declaration of loyalty to the great Duke, whose house should unify the scattered "Tribes of Israel" into a great and powerful Netherlandish nation ≈ a reborn and forceful "Golden Fleece".

• The present situation – *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, det.



Underlying meaning: the nationalist Christian Lamb was replaced by the imperial orb, which has captured the four capitals of Brabant.

Research paper available for consultation

All images in the public domain

NOTES

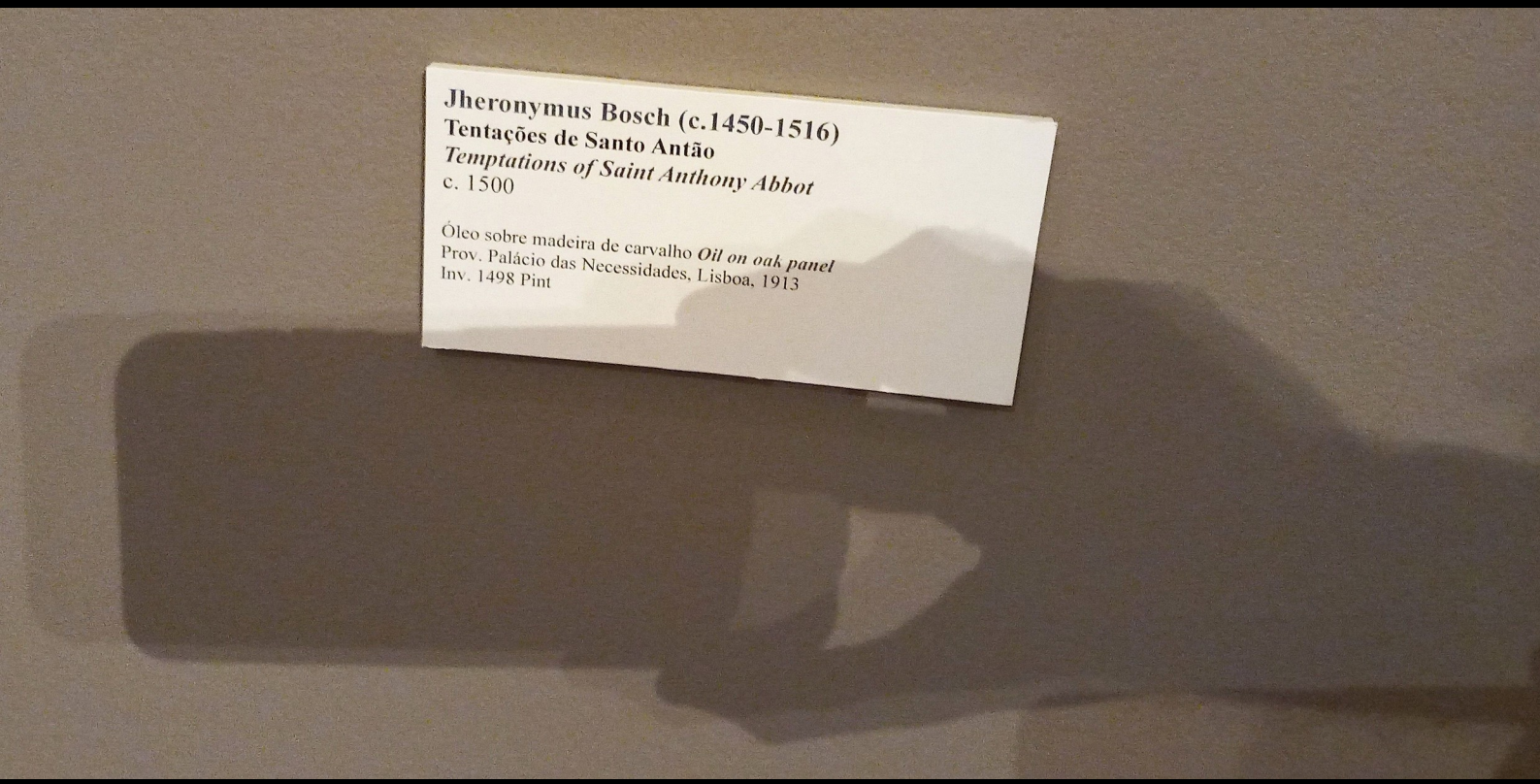
[1] See *Bosch and the hidden devils of the Garden*; and *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, pp147-148.

[2] On the *Ghent Altarpiece* see *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, pp.61-64, 100.

[3] See *On the origin and meaning of Bosch's Garden*.

[4] See *Bosch, the surdo canis*, p.4.

[5] See *On the origin and meaning of Bosch's Garden*. On the correlation between the Golden Fleece and the Christian Lamb, it has to be noted that the "lamb" painted Van Eyck is relatively grown, somehow suggesting a sheep/ram (≈ the Golden Fleece). Such subtle ambiguities were actually quite common, and intended to open or emphasize different layers of meaning.


Jheronymus Bosch (c.1450-1516)
Tentações de Santo Antão
Temptations of Saint Anthony Abbot
c. 1500
Óleo sobre madeira de carvalho Oil on oak panel
Prov. Palácio das Necessidades, Lisboa, 1913
Inv. 1498 Pint